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# Formulating an Intentional Curriculum for Spiritual Leadership Development at the West University Church of Christ

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## ABSTRACT

This project addresses the lack of a formal curriculum for spiritual leadership formation in the West University Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. While the West University Church of Christ has been blessed by strong congregational leaders in both the past and present, recent conversations revealed the need for a deeper connection to God and a better understanding of spiritual leadership on the part of the congregation's leaders. The problem I identified was a lack of understanding about spiritual leadership in contrast to secular understandings of leadership and the lack of a formal curriculum to help address this problem.

This project assembled a small, diverse group of congregational members to create a spiritual leadership curriculum that helps develop a Christian *phronesis* among the current leaders of the congregation. This group met for a weekend retreat to examine the background of Philippians, spiritual leadership, and a theology of *phronesis*. Afterwards, the group assembled for eight sessions to develop a spiritual leadership curriculum. Using the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 as its foundation, this curriculum defines spiritual leadership as fulfilling Paul's calling to develop the *phronesis* of Christ through study, reflection, and intentional spiritual practices and then helping others do the same in their own lives. Each week was organized around a theme from Philippians and the Christ Hymn. During the week the team implemented spiritual practices in their own lives. When they assembled together, the team reflected on those experiences together, brainstormed questions to address the weekly theme, and

developed a spiritual leadership lesson that utilized biblical study, reflection, and spiritual disciplines. I assessed the validity of this curriculum through the triangulation of researcher field notes, insider evaluation, and the evaluation of an outside expert. According to these three areas of evaluation, the curriculum is an effective way to develop spiritual leadership in a congregation.

This project thesis explores the theological foundations of the curriculum, the method of its construction, and its practical possibilities for future leadership development at the West University Church of Christ.

Formulating an Intentional Curriculum for Spiritual Leadership Development at the West  
University Church of Christ

A Project Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School of Theology  
Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

By  
Daniel McGraw

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To Megan and Hannah,  
who demonstrate grace, mercy, and forgiveness,  
and illustrate the love of God for me each day

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congregation. I also want to thank the CDT for their dedication and hard work throughout this project. The entire congregation is blessed by their dedication of their time and talents.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	LIST OF FIGURES .....	iv
I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Title of Project .....	2
	Ministerial Context .....	2
	Current Snapshot of the Congregation.....	5
	Current Snapshot of Congregational Leadership.....	6
	The Congregational Narrative of Concern.....	8
	Statement of Purpose .....	15
	Basic Assumptions.....	18
	Basic Definitions.....	19
	Delimitations and Limitations.....	22
II.	THEOLOGY OF PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 AS A PATTERN FOR LEADERSHIP .....	23
	Theology of Spiritual Leadership .....	49
	<i>Phronesis</i> and Spiritual Leadership .....	55
III.	METHODOLOGY .....	61
	Methodology of the Project .....	61
	Format of the Project Intervention.....	63
	Intervention Participants .....	63
	Description of the Intervention .....	65



	Retreat .....	68
	Sessions .....	75
	Session 1 .....	77
	Session 2 .....	79
	Session 3 .....	81
	Session 4 .....	83
	Session 5 .....	86
	Session 6 .....	87
	Session 7 .....	89
	Session 8 .....	91
	Evaluation Session .....	93
	Evaluation Methodology .....	93
IV.	RESULTS .....	97
	Researcher Observer Insights—Field Notes .....	98
	Retreat .....	98
	Sessions .....	102
	Spiritual Formation .....	103
	Kenosis .....	108
	Phronesis .....	111
	Spiritual Leadership .....	117
	Insider Evaluation .....	120
	Outsider Evaluation—Outside Expert Analysis .....	125
	Final Reflections .....	128

V.	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	129
	Limits, Reflexivity, and Credibility .....	129
	Applicability .....	131
	Transformations Experienced through the Intervention .....	132
	Changes within the Curriculum .....	133
	Impact on the Participants.....	134
	Impact on the Congregation and Leadership .....	135
	Personal Impact.....	136
	Future Impact on the Congregation .....	138
	Questions for Future Research.....	139
	Conclusion .....	141
	WORKS CITED .....	143
	APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	148
	APPENDIX B: OUTLINE OF RETREAT SESSIONS .....	150
	APPENDIX C: RESEARCHER FIELD NOTE FORM.....	155
	APPENDIX D: CODING GUIDELINES .....	157
	APPENDIX E: FINAL SESSION – PARTICIPANT EVALUATION .....	158
	APPENDIX F: CURRICULUM – LEADER’S GUIDE .....	159

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Pyramid Model.....	51
2. Inverted Pyramid Model .....	52
3. Missional Leadership Model.....	53
4. Spiritual Leadership Model.....	54

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis addresses the need for the West University Church of Christ to develop an intentional curriculum for spiritual leadership development. This curriculum will emphasize spiritual formation as a key component for Christlike leadership within a congregational context. Chapter 1 introduces this thesis by discussing the background and current context of the West University congregation, demonstrating the need for spiritual leadership development. This chapter will include the current challenges and opportunities within this context, clarifying the problem and stating the definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the project. Chapter 2 outlines and develops a theological framework of spiritual leadership from the context of Philippians 2. Chapter 3 explains the intervention methodology that was implemented, describing the methods employed throughout the various steps of the intervention. Chapter 4 explores the results generated from this intervention through the lens of qualitative analysis, using a triangulated perspective: my field notes, questionnaire responses from the team participants, and the evaluation of the curriculum by an outside expert. Chapter 5 describes the impact of this project and imagine future possibilities for this project in the context of our congregation.

### **Title of Project**

The title of this project is “Formulating an Intentional Curriculum for Spiritual Leadership Development at the West University Church of Christ.” Currently the church faces a leadership dilemma: the congregational leaders would like to develop a deeper spirituality, both personally and congregationally. They also hope to focus more on spiritual shepherding than on congregational maintenance and management. Yet they also feel a lack of spiritual depth upon which to draw in regards to these issues. They often feel stretched and harried with leadership and ministry. Thus the goal of this project is to develop a curriculum that can enhance the spirituality of current leaders, helping them deepen their spiritual connection to God while also shaping their perception of spiritual leadership.

### **Ministerial Context**

The West University Church of Christ is a small Church of Christ located in the inner loop of Houston, Texas.<sup>1</sup> The congregation is located in West University Place, an incorporated community situated near both Rice University and the Texas Medical Center. The church was founded in 1939 and began meeting in various locations in the West University area, moving into its current property on Bissonnet Street in 1950. The church’s facilities were expanded four times over the next twenty years in order to keep up with the increasing membership. The congregation’s membership grew to 570 members by 1970. This was the high-water mark for the church’s membership, and the membership remained around 550 for the next fifteen years.

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1. The church often goes by different names: West University Church of Christ; West U Church of Christ; West U Church; and WUCC. Hereinafter the church will be referred to as “WUCC.”

The WUCC began to decline in the late 1980s, mostly due to the changing demographics of the West University area. West University Place changed its building codes, which began a period of gentrification: old houses were bought up and torn down, and new owners built large houses on multiple lots, driving up the property values and taxes. This was a period of rapid socio-economic change that transformed not only the neighborhood but the congregation as well. The city transitioned from a middle class neighborhood to a wealthy community. As a result, a significant portion of the church's "target audience" changed drastically. Many of the long term members sold their houses and moved into the suburbs, often placing membership in churches closer to their homes. These contextual changes impacted the church significantly, and the membership of West University began to wane.

These changes also had a significant impact on the congregation's leadership. There was a void in leadership as many long-time members and potential leaders left for other churches. Also, the church shifted from being a neighborhood church to a commuter church, with many of the members traveling in from the suburbs. This added to the strain on church leadership as fewer people were available during the week and there were fewer individuals who were willing to take on leadership roles. There are frequent changes in other areas of the church's leadership as well, with elders and deacons often serving for only a few years before stepping down. Although some of these leadership changes resulted from job transfers, much of the turnover stemmed from burnout and leadership weariness. Many of these former leaders stayed in the area but started attending other churches or even quitting church altogether. Those who continued leading often felt stretched and weary from their work.

By 2001 the church had a membership of 250 to 275. The church experienced another decline in 2002 brought on by a significant disagreement between the minister, elders, and various church members.<sup>2</sup> While this conflict did not have a specific source, it concerned disagreements over different visions and prerogatives on the part of the various leadership groups. Various factions arose based on personalities and individuals within the church, specifically between the minister at the time and the elders. These factions were primarily based on the individuals involved, not on theological or ministerial issues. These groups polarized, leading to deeper divisions in the congregation.

People began to leave the church as the conflict ensued under the surface. Although the church did not split, per se, more than 125 people left over the course of the next two years, declining from approximately 250 to 125 members. This decline was not a mass exodus of people but, rather, took place gradually as families left the church for other churches in the area. This added to a general sense of unease on the part of many church members.

The leadership was also fractured, with a couple of elders, former elders, and deacons leaving during this time. Some went to other churches; others stopped attending any church altogether. In addition, the pulpit minister resigned and left the congregation. This affected both the spiritual life and the congregational unity of the church. The remaining leadership stepped up to keep the church together. They helped cultivate an atmosphere of love, perseverance, and cohesion in WUCC. In addition, the ministers who

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2. This is taken from a conversation with the elders of West University held on October 9, 2013, as well as various appreciative inquiry interviews held in the fall of 2013.

came afterwards helped the church heal and draw closer. It was through their tireless work and influence that the church survived and developed a strong sense of community. Many of those individuals have now stepped down, however, due to health concerns or burnout.

### **Current Snapshot of the Congregation**

In 2016 the WUCC has approximately 150 members, with an additional ten to fifteen long-term visitors. The congregation is comprised of three main age groups. Thirty percent of the congregation are older individuals who have been members of WUCC for many years. Many of these families have served as the foundation of the congregation and its leadership for decades. Approximately forty percent of the congregation is made up of young couples who are starting families or already have children.<sup>3</sup> These families provide a significant portion of the ministry initiative, planning, and implementation. Another twenty percent of the congregation are children, ranging from birth through high school. Most of the church's thriving ministries are focused on teaching and maturing children: VBS, Leadership Training for Christ (LTC), FootSteps (a daycare program), and the youth and children's ministries. The remaining ten percent are made up of individuals in other life stages: young professionals, middle-aged families, and older, single adults.

Most of the congregation is middle class or upper-middle class, but all socioeconomic levels are represented in the congregation. Most of the congregation is educated, and many members have graduate degrees. There are a number of doctors,

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3. For many years the congregation operated a strong college and young professionals' ministry; many of these individuals have married and transitioned into a new demographic. Thus only one or two individuals would now classify themselves as "young professionals."



lawyers, architects, and financiers in the congregation; a large percentage of the church is associated with the various oil and natural gas industries in the city.

At first glance the church seems racially homogenous, with more than seventy percent of the congregation identifying as white. The congregation is actually quite diverse, however. There are members and attendees from Singapore, China, Congo, Belgium, Nigeria, and Mexico. At least six separate first languages are present in the congregation (English, Spanish, French, Jibu, Swahili, and Mandarin). There are also seven former missionaries who call WUCC their home.<sup>4</sup> The congregation has a number of African-American youth who are attending the congregation due to the influence of a family in the church that mentors them. In addition, the church has a number of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian members. The membership continues to become more diverse each year with changes in the demographics of Houston.

### **Current Snapshot of Congregational Leadership**

The leadership of the church has changed over the course of the past few years. In 2015 I was asked to transition into full-time preaching with the retirement of our former minister. We also hired Roy Rhodes to serve as our community minister, and he began working in May of 2015. Two long-term elders stopped serving in positions of leadership in the church due to health concerns and work-related stress. One of these elders (Ralph) had served as an elder for more than twenty years, and he was considered a spiritual patriarch of the congregation. The other (Kelly) had served for more than sixteen years and provided great wisdom to the elders. Another long-term deacon, Roger, passed away after a battle with cancer, which changed the dynamics of our deaconate. Two new

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4. These missionaries worked in Kenya, Holland, Germany, and Argentina.

deacons were added in the past year to take on new areas of responsibility, involvement and missions. Thus the past year and a half has been a time of transition for the WUCC leadership.

Currently the church is served by a full-time minister, a community minister, and a part-time youth minister. The congregation has two elders, nine deacons, and a number of other members who help oversee various ministries within the church.

The church's elders serve in two main areas: overseeing pastoral needs and managing church business. The elders are working with the deacons to hand off more of the managerial duties in order to focus more on pastoral care and shepherding, but they currently provide congregational oversight in areas of finance and decision-making. The elders meet weekly to discuss various agenda items, and the church's ministers also attend these meetings. The ministers are given an equal position to the elders in terms of suggesting vision, setting a course of action, and making decisions; indeed, it is often the ministers who set the meeting's agenda. The elders and staff have a collegial relationship, and each group considers the opinions when making decisions or casting vision. In addition, deacons are invited to sit in on elders' meetings and participate, especially if there are items of consideration that involve or impact their areas of ministry.

The deacons each have individual responsibilities over the various areas of ministry in the congregation. These areas include worship, adult education, children's ministry, building/parsonage maintenance, finance, missions, involvement, and older

adult ministry. These deacons meet monthly to discuss their ministry areas, share information, and work together to improve congregational ministry.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to these formal positions of leadership, there are also people who are considered unofficial ministry leaders in various areas.<sup>6</sup> These include VBS and LTC coordinators, facilitators of the men's and women's ministries, and individuals who serve in various activities for the congregation (i.e., fellowship meals, building security, etc.). While these individuals do not have official leadership titles, they are seen by both the congregation and the formal leadership as leaders in their respective roles.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Congregational Narrative of Concern**

In spite of these various levels of leadership, both formal and informal, the current eldership feels stretched thin. Part of this stems from the need to raise up new leaders from within the congregation. But there is a deeper, underlying cause that strikes at the heart of the problem: the WUCC leaders need to develop a deeper spiritual life to sustain them as they serve and lead the congregation. I was able to gain this insight into the

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5. Additionally, church staff attends these meetings to provide insight into other areas of church life and ministry. This monthly meeting is a relatively new development, and is spearheaded by one of the congregation's deacons. Thus this initiative is still in a state of flux.

6. There are a number of different areas of the leadership within the congregation. In most Churches of Christ, leadership refers to the elders, deacons, and ministers of the congregation. At WUCC these roles are restricted to men; this is based on the traditional Church of Christ polity of male leadership, which is discussed later in Chapter 1. Hereinafter I refer to these three leadership positions as the "formal leadership." In our congregation there are a number of informal leadership positions as well. These would include ministry leaders and organizers, Bible class teachers, ministry volunteers, and others. These positions are not reserved for a specific gender, but involve both men and women. These individuals who exercise leadership without a specific title I will refer to hereinafter as "informal leaders." Both groups are an integral part of the life, ministry, and leadership of the WUCC.

7. Indeed, the elders and deacons of WUCC typically identify these individuals as leaders in their conversations and announcements. While the church has discussed titles such as "ministry leader," there is no formal recognition of those titles currently.

leadership's needs through the use of various ethnographic approaches, including appreciative inquiry and pastoral conversations with various congregational leaders,

In the fall of 2013 I conducted a series of appreciative inquiry interviews within the congregation. Appreciative inquiry is a method of research that draws on the history of a group or institution in order to understand the implications for its future.<sup>8</sup> AI uses the insights of individuals who participate in the group in order to draw a deeper understanding of that group. AI originally began as a new, more positive method for organizational development that drew on the strengths of an institution rather than focusing on its weaknesses. AI contends that the manner in which the questions are framed determines the responses that are received. If questions are framed in a negative light (e.g., "What would you like to change about the organization?" or "What challenges does the church face?"), the responses are negative. Instead, AI focuses on the positive core, the historic strengths, talents, and capacities of the organization), highlighting these strengths while setting an agenda for future growth and development.<sup>9</sup> Jane Watkins and Bernard Mohr state,

Appreciative Inquiry is a collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the "life-giving forces" that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms. It is a journey during which profound knowledge of a human system at its moments of wonder is uncovered and used to co-construct the best and highest future of that system.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Hereinafter called AI.

9. David L. Cooperrider, Diana Whitney, and Joaqueline M. Stavros, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* (Brunswick, OH: Crown Custom Pub., 2005), 30-31.

10. Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard J. Mohr, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination, Practicing Organization Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001), 14.

In essence, AI is discernment through storytelling and sharing narrative, meant to be generative, creative, and life-giving, helping the church listen to its stories in order to discern its present and its future.<sup>11</sup> AI consists of four phases: (1) discovery, (2) dream, (3) design, and (4) destiny/delivery.<sup>12</sup> Each of these phases leads directly into the next phase, creating a positive action plan to help achieve the dreams determined by the group's communal responses and dreams.<sup>13</sup>

The goal of the AI project was to interview a wide cross-section of the church's membership to better understand the strengths and challenges of the congregation as we moved forward in setting a vision and action plan. Sixteen individuals from the congregation participated in this inquiry. These participants included both long-term and newer members, and they came from a wide variety of backgrounds, demographics, and marital statuses.<sup>14</sup> Each interview was conducted in a small group of no more than four individuals to encourage greater interaction and conversation among the participants. These groups were asked six questions and their responses were recorded and, later, coded by theme. The questions were as follows:<sup>15</sup>

- (1) Share why you came to West University and became a member here.  
(What is your West U story?)

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11. Summary of Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), KL 498, Kindle.

12. Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook*, 5-7.

13. In AI, the result of these discussions is called the affirmative topic choice, "the selection of topic(s) that will become the focus of the intervention," which helps focus the changes in the organization. See Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook*, 31-32.

14. This represents a little more than 10% of the church's population.

15. Questions 1 through 5 focused on the discovery phase, helping the respondents see the strengths and assets present in the church. Question 6 touched on the dream phase, allowing the respondents to imagine a different future for the church.

- (2) What do you value most about our church? What are the greatest features of our church? What activities or ministries of the church do you feel are the most important?
- (3) Remembering your entire experience at the church... When have you felt most alive, motivated, and excited about your involvement in the church? What made it so exciting? Who else was involved? How did it make you feel?<sup>16</sup>
- (4) When was this church the strongest? What made the church so strong?
- (5) What talents and resources do you see present in our church? Where do you see these resources in action?
- (6) Imagine the future of the church. Some thought-provoking questions/statements might be helpful:
  - a. Where do you want to see the church in five years?
  - b. In what ways do you want to see the church grow?
  - c. What new ministries, activities, or outreach opportunities do you think the church should pursue based on our talents and resources?
  - d. Share two or three of these imaginations (dreams, hopes, wishes) with the group.

These questions generated responses that were then coded and arranged by theme in order to deepen my understanding of the congregation's history and narrative.

One of the greatest strengths that arose from this discussion were the leaders of the congregation. Throughout the course of these interviews, the participants cited numerous examples of people who have a profound impact on the church. One respondent put it succinctly: "I think people are our greatest resource." While some of these comments were about the quality of the ministers, most of these comments were about formal and informal leaders of the congregation, individuals who were dedicated to serving this church with their time, talents, and resources. These included Ralph Arnold (former elder) and his wife, Beverly (ladies' Bible class teacher); Alicia Hinrichs (Bible class teacher and organizer of VBS and LTC); current staff members; and a number of

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16. This question is taken from Branson, *Memories*, KL 2783.

deacons. All of the individuals who were highlighted are leaders, whether formally or informally, in our congregation, demonstrating that the leadership serves the congregation in significant ways.

Another individual, however, helped put this into perspective. She described the church and its leadership as “stretched” because they are often pulled in different directions by numerous needs and requests, from administration to shepherding. There are only two elders, and they feel that they cannot keep up with the needs of the congregation.<sup>17</sup> They are experiencing a sense of tiredness and burnout in ministry, partially due to their small numbers. Additionally, some of those interviewed were formal leaders of the congregation. They made statements about feeling “weary” and “burdened” by ministry at times, and they felt a need to find strength and perseverance in the Lord.

One dream that arose from the AI discussion was the desire to be a church of spiritual formation. Many of the respondents mentioned wanting to create opportunities for the various populations of the congregation to deepen their spiritual life through classes, retreats, and seminars, for example. Two of the main proponents of this dream were an elder and a deacon of the congregation, who personally felt this same desire and need in their own lives.

The narrative of concern that arose from this AI process focused on two areas of growth: the congregants desire a process of spiritual formation, and the church needs to strengthen its cadre of spiritual leaders for their ministry. These two areas are intertwined: as the leaders deepen their own spiritual lives, their leadership and guidance of the church will continue to change and grow spiritually.

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17. This respondent is the wife of a deacon; she discussed how her own husband felt this way at times.

This insight led me to a deeper reflection on the need for spiritual leadership development at our congregation. For the past three years I have noticed this discrepancy between our vision for spiritual leadership and the current status of our leaders. This was reiterated through a recent ethnographic project that I undertook in the spring of 2015.

From February through April I conducted another ethnographic study of the congregation, which consisted of a series of conversations with various leaders in the WUCC. I interviewed seven members of the congregation's formal and informal leadership, specifically focusing on areas of leadership and spirituality. These leaders had a wide range of age and duration of membership in the congregation. They also represented both genders because I wanted to engage both points of view in terms of leadership and spirituality. I also chose individuals who had not taken part in the previous ethnographies I had conducted with the congregation. I wanted to understand how these leaders viewed the church's current polity and spiritual life, while also hearing their desires for the future.

From these discussions I realized that WUCC's leadership needed a clearer vision of spiritual growth and formation, both for themselves and for the congregation. Sunday morning worship provided the only spiritual formation experience for many of the members, and leaders, of the congregation. Yet two of these leaders also contended that there was not a large sense of the "Spirit moving" or of "meeting the Lord" in worship. Another respondent explicitly stated, "There really is not an expectation for God to arrive in our worship experiences." During Sunday service there is a strong emphasis placed on knowledge acquisition, with worship being of secondary importance. Additionally, these leaders thought many individuals came to be entertained in corporate worship, not to



participate. Thus even though Sunday morning worship is seen as the formational event for the congregation as a whole, there is often little expectation of actual formation for the participants.

Additionally, one of the deacons made a strong statement in regard to leadership and spirituality at the congregation. During the interview this deacon stated, “I don’t think I have any spiritual conversations with people from church.” This statement was both disheartening and enlightening and demonstrated a need to develop a deeper spirituality among the leaders of our congregation.

It is important to note that these were the perceptions of individuals from within the WUCC, and they are not representative of every response I received. It is striking, however, that these were the responses given by individuals in positions of leadership. If the leaders perceived the church as lacking in some aspects of spirituality, then that perception is their reality and shapes the way that they lead the congregation spiritually. It also reveals the need to help our leaders develop in their own spiritual lives, helping them become more like Christ so they can help others do the same.

Various leadership groups within the church have echoed this need recently. In the midst of a deacons’ meeting, one deacon finally stated that the meetings tended to feel like nothing but meaningless, tedious business, and that he yearned instead for a time of prayer, reflection, and spiritual depth. The same desire has been reiterated in meetings with the elders and the ministry staff of the congregation in the past year.

All of these interactions suggest a narrative of concern facing the congregation: we must develop spiritual leaders who are deepening their relationship with God. This, in turn, will allow them to better serve the congregation. Leaders cannot hope to lead others

closer to God if they, themselves, are not in the process of spiritual formation. The WUCC currently has no formal resources in place to help individuals develop a deeper spiritual life in order to become Christlike, spiritual leaders in the congregation. In many ways this is because the current leaders need guidance on how to draw closer to God and help others do the same. They have a need to deepen their own spiritual growth in order to become better pastoral leaders who invest themselves in the community. Thus the problem is a lack of an intentional curriculum for spiritual leadership development for the WUCC. The congregation would benefit from a curriculum that emphasizes leadership development through spiritual formation and the acquisition of godly wisdom, helping deepen the spiritual lives and leadership of the congregation's leaders.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to formulate an intentional curriculum for spiritual leadership development at the WUCC. In light of the church's history, current challenges, and congregational context, this project is the way that I chose to address the congregation's need for spiritual leadership development.

As I began discerning the course of action that the WUCC should undertake, I began looking for curricula that might fit our context and need. Much of the current leadership curricula, however, are built on models of leadership that emphasize a structure of business leadership superimposed on an ecclesial structure. Also, there are numerous definitions of what leadership is meant to be, which do not always agree with one another. Additionally, much of the Christian leadership material is based upon theologies and worldviews that simply do not fit the context of our congregation. Finally, I was looking for a curriculum that could be adapted to the context of a smaller

congregation. Yet I was unable to find something that fit the needs that faced our congregation.

The WUCC needed a leadership curriculum that would help develop the spiritual lives of our leaders while also teaching them a model of leadership built around relationship with God and with others, service, and following the example of Christ. In essence, we needed a leadership curriculum that emphasized both spiritual formation and spiritual leadership, while also calling the leaders to act as followers of Jesus and servants of God's people. My ultimate goal was to begin a program helping our leaders develop a deeper spirituality. In order to achieve that goal, however, I determined to create a curriculum that met the specific needs of our congregation. I chose to base this curriculum on the book of Philippians, specifically utilizing Paul's Christ hymn (Phil. 2:5-11) as a model of spiritual leadership. I chose this passage because of both the history of leadership within our congregation and the desire to help leaders develop a deeper spirituality and become more like Christ in their leadership.

Specifically, this curriculum focused on the development of a Christlike *phronesis* through small group interaction, biblical reflection, and spiritual formation. Using Paul's theology of *phronesis* as a model of Christian leadership, this curriculum emphasized various aspects of the Christ hymn to show how the imitation of Christ influences every area of spiritual life and leadership. A Christlike *phronesis* is a pattern of life that is being conformed more and more to the image of God. This curriculum incorporated reflection on Scripture (both individual and communal), spiritual formation practices, and missional engagement in the church and community. The goal of the curriculum was to develop a

Christlike *phronesis* through spiritual formation in order to draw closer to God and to help lead others to be spiritually formed.

In the course of this project I worked with a small group of members from the congregation to create a spiritual leadership curriculum. Hereinafter this group will be referred to as the CDT (curriculum development team). This process began with a weekend retreat that discussed a theology of *phronesis*, spiritual formation, and spiritual leadership centered upon the example of Jesus. This retreat also involved the current elders and deacons in the last session, during which the group participants and these leaders worked together to ascertain the areas in which the leadership needs to grow and develop spiritually in order to best align to the example of Christ.

This retreat was followed by eight sessions of curriculum development. Each session began with a reflection on an assigned spiritual practice. At each session one CDT member led the group in the spiritual discipline that was practiced for the previous week. That individual also facilitated a discussion about what they learned from that spiritual discipline and how it helped them throughout the week as well as what they saw as the potential implementation of this discipline in the curriculum. Then the CDT discussed the theme for the week and created a purpose statement and series of questions that aligned with this theme. The CDT also gathered information from other sources (e.g., biblical examples, outside articles, etc.), incorporating relevant information into the curriculum.<sup>18</sup> At the end of each session I introduced a new spiritual practice or practices

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18. These outside articles were provided by the researcher, and they are detailed in ch. 3. Biblical examples were provided both by the researcher and by the members of the CDT in the course of the discussion.

for the CDT to implement throughout the week. When necessary, I also explained and modeled the new practice for the team.

As the researcher, I took on a number of roles within the CDT. I recruited the members of the team to work together on the curriculum formation. I also led this group each week, developing the weekly theme and garnering insight from the CDT members. I also decided which spiritual disciplines would be practiced each week in order to guide towards the overall theme. I asked individuals to volunteer for various leadership roles within the CDT, from facilitating the spiritual practice discussion to acting as secretary for the curriculum itself. I also compiled the curriculum notes and compiled the curriculum and then sent it to the CDT for their approval and suggestions.

At the end of this process, I created a leader's guide for the curriculum. I then asked an outside expert to analyze the curriculum, discerning its strengths and weaknesses. Although it is outside of the scope of this intervention, the WUCC will implement this curriculum in various settings for the leadership groups of the congregation.

### **Basic Assumptions**

This project assumes that the best way to develop spiritual leaders is through the deepening of spiritual practices in potential leaders. By developing a deeper spirituality, leaders will be better prepared for the tasks and roles of ministry. These disciplines are not just meant to be done individually, but rather to also benefit the community. Spiritual formation that helps develop a Christlike *phronesis* will ultimately lead to action.<sup>19</sup> If the

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19. Carrie Birmingham, in her discussion of *phronetic* development in education, shows that Aristotle considered *phronesis* the highest virtue. The role of educators is to help students develop *phronesis* (what she calls "moral discernment") through reflection. Ultimately, she argues, *phronesis* leads to action. "Actions themselves are related to virtue, but they are secondary to and derive from virtue as

leaders of WUCC develop the same *phronesis* as Christ Jesus, they will begin to do the things that Christ did: practice humility, serve, empty themselves for the sake of others, and put others ahead of themselves. Thus spiritual formation leads to action in the life of the one being transformed.

This project assumes a definition of spiritual leadership that stands in contrast to other models of secular and congregational leadership.<sup>20</sup> In this project, spiritual leadership is understood as a personal connection to God through spiritual formation practices that enhance one's own spirituality, enabling that leader to then guide others to becoming more like Christ and moving towards a specific goal, ultimately giving glory to God. Spiritual leaders are those who are developing a Christlike *phronesis* in their own lives and helping others do the same. This definition of spiritual leadership focuses less on organizational structures/communication and more on personal and communal spiritual development.

### **Basic Definitions**

*Phronesis* is a transliteration of the Greek term φρόνησις. It is often translated as “mindset,” “thinking,” “attitude,” or even “wisdom.” I prefer Stephen Fowl’s translation of “pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting” due to its emphasis on both intellectual contemplation and physical implementation.<sup>21</sup>

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indications and natural outgrowths of a virtuous character. If moral actions are not present, then one can say that moral virtue is not being expressed” in the life of the student. See Carrie Birmingham, “Phronesis: A Model for Pedagogical Reflection,” in *Journal of Teacher Education* 55.4 (Sept./Oct. 2004): 313-17; quotation on 317.

20. These models will be outlined in ch. 2.

21. Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 6.

*Spiritual formation* is “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”<sup>22</sup> It is an ongoing process in which we partner with the Trinitarian God to draw closer to God and be transformed more and more into God’s likeness. This takes place primarily through participation in various experiences that deepen our relationship with God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These exercises include prayer, *lectio divina*, service, Ignatian examen, meditation, and hospitality, among others.

*Leadership* is “a relationship of influence in which one person seeks to influence the vision, values, attitudes, and behaviors of another.”<sup>23</sup> Secular leadership is often based on inherent traits such as charisma, ability, attractiveness, or availability.<sup>24</sup> Leadership is often focused on the acquisition of power, influence, or position. This leadership goal, however, stands in contrast to the goals and definition of spiritual leadership.

Spiritual leadership is a form of leadership in which the leaders are being conformed into the image of Christ through spiritual formation. Spiritual leaders are

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22. Jeffrey P. Greenman, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective: Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 24. This is similar to M. Robert Mulholland’s definition: “Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others,” but Greenman also emphasizes the need for Christian community. See M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: IVP Books, 1993), 15.

23. Walt Wright, “Introduction: Mentor to Mentor,” in *The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders*, ed. Eric O Jacobsen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 3.

24. See Richard L. Mayhue, “Authentic Spiritual Leadership,” in *Master’s Seminary Journal* 22/2 (Fall 2011): 213-24. Mayhue demonstrates that there are four characteristics of strong, natural leaders: they are (1) highly motivated, (2) externally pleasing (attractive, charismatic, etc.), (3) knowledgeable, and (4) available. While these often make good, natural leaders, these qualities do not always translate to effective spiritual leadership.

those who are developing the *phronesis* of Christ through consideration, humility, service, obedience, and cruciformity. These leaders are then able to act as mentors, guides, and coaches for others, helping them develop the *phronesis* of Christ for the sake of themselves and the world.<sup>25</sup> This requires leaders to take seriously the mission of God, the incarnation of Christ, and the ongoing work of the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> At its core, spiritual leadership takes seriously the command to help the church be spiritually formed into the image of Christ.

Kenosis is the intentional emptying of oneself for the sake of others.<sup>27</sup> The word kenosis is derived from the Greek verb κενόω, which means “to empty” or “to deprive.” It can also convey “a sense of nullification or making void.”<sup>28</sup> As Jesus emptied himself for the sake of the world, followers of Jesus are called to empty themselves for God and for others. In the course of this project, this emptying will include pride, fear, selfishness, anger, ambition, and sin. This kenosis will be facilitated through spiritual practices such as accountability, Ignatian examen, and confession.

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25. Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 300. Hastings declares that this is what prepares the church to be the church in the world.

26. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), Kindle, KL 488-564. Roxburgh and Romanuk use this phrase to describe missional leadership, but I contend that the idea is equally applicable to spiritual leadership. Indeed, leaders who are developing the *phronesis* of Christ through spiritual formation will, by nature, be missional. This is beyond the scope of this paper, however.

27. This definition of kenosis has been greatly influenced by the work of Michael Gorman. Gorman contends that the crucifixion becomes Paul’s narrative pattern for living. He states that the cross sets a narrative pattern for Christ’s followers that includes ideas of altruism/self-sacrifice, self-giving, and voluntary self-humbling. These, among others, are “patterns of cruciformity” that are “the standard for life in Christ.” See Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 82-85, 93.

28. Fowl, *Philippians*, 95. Fowl points to Paul’s usage of kenosis in Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; 1 Cor. 9:15; and 2 Cor. 9:3.



### **Delimitations and Limitations**

This project is designed for use within the WUCC, and it will be implemented among the various leaders of the congregation. The WUCC, like many Churches of Christ, maintains a male-only structure of leadership.<sup>29</sup> Thus positions of formal leadership are restricted to men. This project, however, will be geared towards the participation of both genders, with the expectation that women can (and do) serve in informal positions of ministerial leadership in our church and have a significant impact on the spirituality and ministry of the congregation.

While this project will be geared toward developing deeper spiritual leadership, it requires the active participation of those undertaking the curriculum. This project can only introduce leaders to these practices; it cannot ensure their continuation. In addition, while the curriculum will seek to change the participants' perceptions of leadership, participants come with their own preconceived notions of leadership based on their background, culture, and experience. Thus this curriculum is limited by the participants' willingness and openness to the project and in the ongoing continuation of these practices. It is also limited by the scope of the project and thus cannot guarantee continued change over time.

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29. While this is not universal in the Stone-Campbell Movement nor in the Churches of Christ, formal positions of leadership are generally restricted to men. Kathy Pully contends that women became more restricted in terms of leadership after the division between the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. She cites the opposition of David Lipscomb and other leaders, who appealed to various passages of Scripture to restrict women in leadership positions. In addition, she also cites the growing fundamentalist movement in the South and Campbell's literalist hermeneutic as contributing factors to this view of women. See Kathy J. Pully, "Women in Ministry: Twentieth Century, Churches of Christ," in *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, eds. Douglas A. Foster et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 779.

## CHAPTER II

### THEOLOGY OF PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 AS A PATTERN FOR LEADERSHIP

One could argue that there are better letters for a discussion of church leadership than Philippians. Among the Pauline corpus the letter to the Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles all contain extended discourses on church polity and ecclesial leadership qualifications. Ephesians expounds upon the various leadership roles and positions within the church, while the Pastorals elucidate the exemplary qualifications of leaders that the churches should desire. Why should we examine Philippians, a general letter written to the entire church, in order to ascertain Paul's vision of leadership?

The answer is contained in the greeting of the epistle. Although the letter is addressed to the entire Philippian church ("to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi"), it is the only letter in the entire Pauline corpus that is addressed specifically to the leaders of the church: "together with the overseers and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).<sup>1</sup> Paul's letters were written to be read to the entire congregation in the context of corporate worship; thus he addresses the church as a whole in order to commend this Christlike lifestyle to all those present. Paul is concerned with the spiritual formation of every member of the congregation, from the leaders to the newest believers. His appeal directly to the elders and deacons, however, serves as a specific instruction to the leaders of the

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1. Paul does not specifically address these leaders again in the epistle. In 4:3, however, Paul does address other leaders in the congregation by name, specifically, Clement, Euodia and Syntyche, and other *συνεργῶν*, "co-laborers." Thus Paul bookends much of the epistle with appeals directly to those in positions of leadership within the congregation.

congregations in the city in how they should conduct their own life, ministry, and leadership. They can lead others towards spiritual maturity only if they are being spiritually formed after the pattern of Christ.

Paul's purpose in writing the Philippian epistle is to encourage these believers to be formed into the image of Christ and to allow that identity to influence every aspect of their lives. Paul writes, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27), calling them to a life shaped by the narrative of Christ. Gordon Fee argues that Philippians is a "letter of moral exhortation," written in the context of friendship between Paul and the Philippian church.<sup>2</sup> Paul has a personal, vested interest in the spiritual development of the congregation. Specifically, he wants them to live in accordance with the example of Christ, who serves as their paradigm for their relationship with one another and their life in the world.

The church in Philippi was established by Paul in 49 CE during his second missionary journey. Luke describes how Paul, who was ministering in the province of Asia, had a vision of a Macedonian man begging Paul to come and evangelize in the province of Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). Paul sailed for Europe and landed at the port of Neapolis. He then traveled along the *Via Egnatia* to the city of Philippi, which Luke describes as "a Roman colony and the leading city of the district of Macedonia" (Acts 16:12). On the Sabbath he went to a place of prayer, where he began to speak to the assembly of women. Lydia, a leading woman of the city, was convinced by the message, which led to the conversion of her entire household. Paul and Silas were eventually

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2. Gordon Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 5.

arrested for driving a Pythian spirit from a slave girl. They were beaten and thrown into prison, but were miraculously delivered by God through an earthquake. These events led to the conversion of their jailer and his entire household. Upon discovering that Paul and Silas were citizens of Rome, the city leaders sought to appease them, but also asked them to leave the city.

It is unknown how many people were converted during Paul's ministry in Philippi. Luke tells us that Paul and Silas "met with the brothers and sisters" in Philippi before they left (Acts 16:40). Only three people from Philippi are named within the epistle (Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement), and none of these individuals appear within the Acts narrative. Thus it is impossible to ascertain the size of the church in Philippi at the time that Paul wrote this letter.

Paul writes this epistle to the Philippian church from prison between 59 and 62 CE. Although scholars are divided on the provenance of the letter,<sup>3</sup> Rome provides the best explanation for the evidence that is available. Paul is "in chains," yet his imprisonment has led to the opportunity to share the Gospel with "the whole palace guard" (Phil. 1:13). He also refers to those of "Caesar's household" who send their greetings (4:22). This does not necessitate an origin in Rome, for praetorians and members of Caesar's οἰκία were scattered throughout the Empire. Paul's imprisonment in

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3. There are three dominant theories regarding to origin of Paul's letter: Rome, Ephesus, and Caesarea. Many of these questions stem from the large distance between Rome and Philippi, necessitating longer travel; theories that Philippians is a composite of multiple letters, necessitating travel between the place of Paul's imprisonment; and theological ideas and language that correspond to Paul's thoughts in earlier letters rather than the later Prison Epistles. For a full discussion of these issues, see Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 19-26.

Rome seems to be the simplest conclusion, but Paul does not identify the location of his letter.

Throughout the epistle Paul gives various insights into the occasion of his letter. The church seems to face some external pressure or threat (1:27-30). He encourages them to live blamelessly and purely, “shining like stars” in the midst of the spiritual darkness around them (2:14-16). He speaks to a dispute taking place between two members of the church, Euodia and Syntyche, in 4:2. Paul also wants to thank the Philippians for their love, prayers, and financial support during his ministry and imprisonment, and he gives thanks to God for their faithfulness. Paul is addressing the immediate concerns facing the church, strengthening them for the issues they are enduring.

There seems to be a deeper occasion that underlies the letter, however. In Philippians 1:27, Paul summarizes the main point of his epistle with this statement: “Now, the important thing is this: as citizens of heaven live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> James Thompson aligns the structure of Philippians to Aristotle’s rhetorical devices, and he advocates that 1:27 forms the *propositio*, “the thesis statement of the argument,” for the book of Philippians.<sup>5</sup> For Paul, the word *μόνον* signifies the importance of his following statement, to live out their citizenship (*πολιτεύεσθε*) in a manner worthy of the gospel. In 3:20, Paul reiterates this admonition, reminding the Philippians “but our citizenship (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven.” Although the word implies “to be a citizen,” it can also be understood in terms of “to deal with, to conduct oneself, to

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4. Ibid., 144. The phrase “of heaven” is not present in the Greek text, but O’Brien interjects it here based on the phrase “ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει” in 3:20.

5. James. W. Thompson, “Preaching to Philippians,” *Int* 61, no. 3 (July 2007): 303-5.

live.”<sup>6</sup> Typically, Paul chooses the word περιπατέω in his letters to discuss the theology of Christian living, walking, or being (e.g., Rom. 13:13; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:12). It seems, however, that Paul chose the politically charged verb πολιτεύεσθε because of the values present in Philippi. Philippi had been granted status as a *ius Italicum*, where Roman laws and customs ruled and those who had been citizens of the city were granted Roman citizenship as well. There were sharp distinctions in Philippi between those who had Roman citizenship and those who did not. Those in Philippi prided themselves on their Roman citizenship,<sup>7</sup> but through his use of πολιτεύεσθε, Paul calls them to a citizenship that trumps all: citizenship in the kingdom of God. Their lives were meant to be a reflection of that which they believed. To Paul, the core concept of the spiritual life is to live in accordance with the gospel narrative and the example of Christ. Thus the letter serves a *parenetic* function as Paul teaches his recipients how to conform their lives to the pattern of Christ. “To live worthily as citizens of heaven” becomes synonymous with the spiritual life, a life lived in accordance with the pattern of Christ.

This pattern continues throughout the epistle. Paul continues to build an argument for the development of a lifestyle based on the example of Christ. As Meeks contends, “this letter’s most comprehensive purpose is the shaping of a Christian *phronesis*, a practical moral reasoning that is ‘conformed to [Christ’s] death’ in hope of his

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6. Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2 ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 80. In Acts 23:1 the phrase ἀγαθῇ πεπολίτευμαι τῷ θεῷ is translated as “fulfilled my duty” (NIV) or “lived my life” (ESV) before God. Thus it implies living a life in accordance to one’s duties or obligations.

7. Joseph Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 114-6, points out that numerous funerary inscriptions discovered in Philippi contain references to both city and Roman citizenship, “suggest[ing] that the distinction between citizen and non-citizen was an important one for inhabitants of the colony” (115).

resurrection.”<sup>8</sup> This *phronesis* should influence every aspect of their lives, from their civic lives to their relationships with one another and to those outside of the church. This *phronesis* should also change their values, with the Christ-ethic challenging the cultural ethics and values of the society in which they lived.

Indeed, the idea of a Christian *phronesis* becomes the unifying idea throughout the Philippian epistle. Paul uses the verb *φρονεῖν* and its cognates ten times throughout the text.<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, translators render this verb with the ideas of having the same “attitude” or “mind.” Yet this translation loses sight of the semantic nuances conveyed by the Greek *phronesis*. Others translate it as “mindset,” “practical moral reasoning,” or “thinking.”<sup>10</sup> Fowl contends that this focus on the intellectual side of the word ignores its deeper understanding of *phronesis* as a way of being or acting; attitude also leads to action. Thus he translates it as “pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.”<sup>11</sup> This *phronesis* serves as the foundation of the entire epistle.

In 1:6, Paul reminds them “that he [God] who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.” Paul focuses on the ongoing work of God in their lives, specifically the development of a *phronesis* based on the example of Christ. In 2:2, Paul calls the Philippians to have “the same mind” (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε) with one another. He calls them to love, fellowship in the Spirit, affection, sympathy, and

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8. Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 333.

9. Phil. 1:7; 2:2 (2 times); 2:5; 3:15 (2 times); 3:19; 4:2; and 4:10 (2 times). Paul uses cognates of *φρονεῖν* another thirteen times throughout his letters; nine of those instances are in Romans, another epistle concerned with a Christian manner of thinking and acting.

10. Fee, *Philippians*, 209; Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 333. Meeks also uses “practical reasoning” and “practical wisdom.”

11. Fowl, *Philippians*, 6.

humility, a mindset that is shaped by the example of Christ. This mindset would inspire and transform their interactions with one another. This would “complete [his] joy.”

Philippians 2:5 serves as the fulcrum of the Philippian letter, for this is the Christian mindset that Paul wants to develop in his recipients. While Paul has alluded to this *phronesis* previously in 2:1-4, he now explicitly states the example he wants them to emulate: “Let this be your pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting, which was also displayed in Christ Jesus.”<sup>12</sup> Paul uses the second-person plural ὑμῖν to demonstrate that this is a calling for all of the Christians, not just a select few. This is the attitude that should permeate the church as a whole.<sup>13</sup> The chief characteristic of this attitude or pattern is based on the example of Jesus, which Paul demonstrates through the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:5-11.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should

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12. Ibid., 88.

13. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 43. Gorman states, “the emphasis in the text is on the reality that life ‘within you (all)’ is life ‘within’ Christ. For this reason, there must be a correspondence between Christ and believers, between his story and theirs, between the hymnic narrative of Christ (presented in vv. 6-11) and the ‘attitude’ or way of thinking and life of the Philippian community.”

14. The use of the term “hymn” is one of contention in New Testament scholarship. Martin argues that it fits a poetic pattern of couplets while also containing rhythm, meter, alliteration, and chiasmus. Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1-13. Other scholars disagree, contending that a hymn is specifically a song or psalm of praise to God. Fowl, *Philippians*, 108-113, summarizes this argument well. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 188, argues that the category of “hymn” is more of a creedal confession containing dogmatic, confessional, and liturgical material. Thus while scholarship is divided on the exact meaning of the term ὕμνος, this paper contends that Phil. 2:6-11 fits with O’Brien’s definition; thus it is designated as a “Christ hymn” in this paper. Additionally, scholars are also divided on whether this material is pre-Pauline, Pauline, or post-Pauline in origin. This thesis also disregards the discussion of origin in favor of a canonical approach: Paul is using this passage to make a specific, theological point.



bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:5-11 ESV)

Gorman contends that the Christ hymn serves as Paul's "master story," the narrative that shapes his epistles and theology.<sup>15</sup>

Yet there are a number of questions that revolve around this passage. What does it mean to "be in the form of God"? How does Jesus empty himself, and of what does he empty himself? To whom does Jesus become obedient? These ideas are key to helping understand the *phronesis* that Christians are to emulate in their lives.

The Christ hymn presented in Phil. 2:6-11 states that Jesus existed "in the form of God" (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ). The exact meaning of *morphe* (μορφή) in the New Testament is difficult to ascertain, given that it is used only here and in Mark 16:12. Additionally, it is used only seven times in the Septuagint (LXX).<sup>16</sup> O'Brien states that in Greek literature it comes to represent "that which may be perceived by the senses ... [and] the embodiment of form ... impl[ying] participation in its nature or character."<sup>17</sup> In the LXX the word often refers to the physical shape or visible appearance of someone or something. For Markus Bockmuehl, there is a literary parallel between "the form of God" and "being equal with God."<sup>18</sup> Fowl contends that the first-century Jewish thought considered the μορφή of God as the visible manifestation of God's attributes and identity.<sup>19</sup> Moreover,

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15. Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 12.

16. Judg 8:18; Job 4:16; Isa 44:13; Dan 3:19; Tob 1:13; Wis 18:1; and 4 Macc 15:4.

17. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 207.

18. Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, Black's New Testament Commentary 11 (Peabody, MA: A & C Black, 1998), 126.

19. Fowl examines statements about μορφή from the LXX, as well as Josephus and Philo, to show a connection between μορφή and δόξα. He states, "Throughout the LXX the visible manifestation of God is associated with God's glory.... This is a conceptual connection based on the LXX's description of the

Fowl shows how Paul describes “a reference to the glory, radiance and splendor by which God’s majesty is made visible to humans.”<sup>20</sup> Through Jesus, God reveals his character and identity to humanity in a tangible, visible way. Jesus existed in the very form of God (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ), and he is the visible manifestation of the glory of God in the midst of humanity. This thinking was not unique to Pauline theology, but can also be seen in other New Testament writings as Jesus is portrayed as the representative of God’s glory on earth.<sup>21</sup> This hymn, then, exclaims that Jesus is the revelation of the glory of God because he existed in the very form of God himself. Through the incarnation God has revealed his μορφή to the world, and Jesus was equal with God in every way.

The hymn continues, however, by stating that although Jesus existed in the form of God, he did not consider it something ἀρπαγμόν. This term is a *hapax legomenon*: it is used only here in the New Testament, never in the LXX, and only rarely in Greek literature. Much of its nuance, then, has been derived from other translations and later Patristic homilies on the text. The exact meaning of ἀρπαγμόν has been an intense discussion between scholars, with numerous nuances and positions.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars approach this idea in terms of “seizing” or “grasping,” which would mean that Jesus rejected the possibility of trying to gain something he did not yet possess.<sup>23</sup> This

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appearance of God to humans in terms of God’s glory.” While related, μορφή and δόξα are not synonymous. Fowl, *Philippians*, 92.

20. Ibid. These examples are found in Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:6.

21. John 1:1, 14; 17:5; Heb 1:3.

22. In his seminal work on this topic, Wright summarizes the various options that have been posited by scholars before providing his own analysis on the subject. See N. T. Wright, “ἀρπαγμός and the Meaning of Philippians 2:5-11,” *Journal for Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 322-45.

23. This position has been summarized through the Latin tags *res rapta* and *res rapienda*, the idea of seeking to hold onto or acquire a prize or goal. See Wright, “ἀρπαγμός,” 322-5; Bockmuehl, *Epistle*, 129-31.

interpretation is problematic in light of the rest of the hymn and subsequent Pauline theology, which portrays Jesus as the exact representation of God. If Jesus is ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, then he already has all of the qualities of God; thus he would not need to “seize” them. Others argue that Jesus already possessed the divine character and attributes of God but did not regard them as a prize that needed to be grasped tightly. Both Wright and Hoover clarify this position by contending that Jesus refused to act in his own self-interest by taking advantage of his equality with God.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Jesus emptied himself of this status by taking the μορφή of a slave.

It is also important to note Paul’s emphasis on Christ’s consideration of this action. Paul writes that Christ “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (2:6). Paul uses the aorist form of ἡγέομαι, a verb that can be translated as “think, consider, regard.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus considered the dichotomy between the μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου before undertaking his kenosis. Kenosis was not something that Jesus casually agreed to do but, instead, was something that Christ considered and about which he thought. Luke Timothy Johnson contends that Paul’s use of the word ἡγέομαι is central to his argument in chapters 2 and 3 “because it suggests once more the genuinely rational character of moral discernment.”<sup>26</sup> Jesus’s kenotic activity shapes his *phronesis*, forming the foundation of every aspect of his life. Jesus’s contemplation serves as a

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24. R. W. Hoover, “The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1971): 102-6; Wright, “ἁρπαγμός,” 344.

25. BDAG, 434.

26. Johnson draws connections between Paul’s use of νοῦς, φρον-, and πίστις, both in the letters of Paul and in Aristotle’s writings. He argues that πίστις is “a measure for moral discernment.” Johnson then demonstrates how Philippians uses “the same language for moral discernment” found in Aristotle and Romans, especially in its use of φρονεῖν. See Luke Timothy Johnson, “Transformation of the Mind and Moral Discernment in Paul,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, NovTSupp 110, eds. J. T. Fitzgerald, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 215-36.

pattern of moral discernment that Paul wants his readers to follow. Paul uses the term ἡγέομαι six times in the letter: 2:3, 6, 25; 3:7, 8 (twice). This consideration becomes the foundation for Paul's communal ethic within the congregation. Paul uses Jesus as the exemplar of a "considered" life in 2:6. Jesus becomes the foundation of their "consideration" of one another. Paul also holds himself up as an example of moral discernment through mental consideration. After talking about the things he once deemed important, Paul then states,

“But whatever gain I had, I counted (ἡγήμην) as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count (ἡγοῦμαι) everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count (ἡγοῦμαι) them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:7-11 ESV).

Paul considers his life in regard to Christ, using Jesus as his own exemplar of moral discernment. While he had considered this old way of life meaningful and fulfilling in the past, the new lens provided by his faith (πίστις) in Christ makes these things now seem like “rubbish.”<sup>27</sup> Knowing Christ Jesus as his LORD has become Paul's new moral compass and the way he discerns meaning. In light of the life dictated by Jesus's example, Paul also states that his only goal, after considering all these things, is to “share his sufferings, becoming like him.” As Johnson has shown, Paul himself connects ἡγέομαι and πίστις, Paul's keywords for “moral discernment.”<sup>28</sup>

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27. One can also translate the phrase πίστεως Χριστοῦ as the “faithfulness of Christ,” which could tie back into Jesus's actions within the narrative of the Christ hymn. I chose to stay with the ESV translation of the passage in this case; however, both translations carry significant weight.

28. Johnson, 220-221.

As a result, Paul calls the Philippian Christians to develop this same moral mindset: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count (ἡγούμενοι) others more significant than yourself” (2:3). Paul holds up Jesus and himself as patterns of moral discernment that the Philippians should follow. For Paul, this is the τοῦτο φρονεῖτε that he desires that they should have. Wendell Willis posits that this *phronesis* is the “intersection of his ecclesiology, Christology, and ethics,” and it should form the way that Christians comport every aspect of their lives.<sup>29</sup> Johnson contends that “the habits Paul seeks to shape in his readers are the habits of Jesus; the character he seeks to mold in his communities is the character of Jesus Christ.”<sup>30</sup> For Paul, this *phronesis* is not inherent but, rather, is learned through attention and right thinking. The Philippian Christians were to consider the values that shaped their lives as Christ considered his own values. Jesus’s reckoning becomes the model that the Philippians were to learn to imitate in their daily lives.

The Christ hymn describes the kenotic activity of Jesus. The word kenotic is derived from the Greek verb κενόω, which means “to empty” or “to deprive.” It can also convey “a sense of nullification or making void.”<sup>31</sup> When Paul uses verbs from the kenosis root, he typically means “to become powerless, or to be emptied of significance.”<sup>32</sup> Jesus voluntarily became powerless, taking on the very nature of a servant.

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29. Wendell Willis, “Seeing the Faith as Paul Sees It,” in *Renewing Tradition: Studies in Texts and Contexts in Honor of James W. Thompson*, edited by Mark W. Hamilton, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Jeffrey Peterson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 181-82.

30. Johnson, “Transformation,” 236.

31. Fowl, *Philippians*, 95. Fowl points to Paul’s usage of kenosis in Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; 1 Cor. 9:15; and 2 Cor. 9:3.

32. Fee, *Philippians*, 210-11.

Paul does not discuss the reason for Christ's kenosis, at least not in the context of Philippians.<sup>33</sup> Jesus practiced kenosis out of obedience to God, but it is left to his readers to infer the reasons behind this kenotic activity. Since Paul is calling them to the same *phronein* as Christ, however, we can infer from his statements before and after to illuminate Christ's kenosis. Paul calls them to humility in imitation of Christ (2:3, 8). He challenges the Philippians to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit" (2:3), just as Christ put aside his own motives and became obedient to God (2:6b, 8). Paul also commands them, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (2:4), which leads directly to Paul's call to "have this same *phronein* in yourselves as was in Christ Jesus" (2:5). Thus Paul seems to suggest that Christ's motivation was his obedience through his kenosis in incarnation and crucifixion. Yet this *phronesis* of obedience to God also brought about salvation through the cross; thus Jesus's actions were also for the sake of others. A *phronesis* that emphasizes obedience to

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33. It is only through reading the rest of the Pauline corpus, as well as other passages from the New Testament, that one can begin to discern the motivation for Christ's kenosis. One possible theological interpretation is that of Michael Gorman, who posits that the Christ hymn serves as Paul's "master story" which forms the basis of Paul's theology and thinking. According to Gorman, the Christ hymn sets an ethical pattern of cruciformity for the church to follow. Gorman defines cruciformity as "conformity to the crucified Christ.... This conformity is a dynamic correspondence in daily life to the strange story of Christ crucified as the primary way of experiencing the love and grace of God." For Gorman "the cross is the interpretive, or hermeneutical, lens through which God is seen; it is the means of grace by which God is known." Through his two-stage kenosis, Jesus reveals the character of God to the world. The cross is not simply to be seen as a part of the salvific story; rather, it is the display of God's innate character, God's self-revelation to the world. According to Gorman, God is cruciform. God puts his selfless love and mercy on display through Jesus's kenosis, his incarnation and his crucifixion for the sake of humanity. "The counterintuitive God revealed in Christ is kenotic and cruciform, the Eternal vulnerable and self-giving One, the God of power-in-weakness." See Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 4-5, 15-18, 32-35.

There are many other ways to understand the kenotic activity of Christ. All of these perspectives go beyond the text of Philippians, however. While the subsequent theology uses cruciformity as a method for understanding the Christ hymn, this theology attempts to approach Philippians simply from the context of the epistle itself, analyzing the information contained within as the method to best understand Paul's practical theology for the Philippian church.

God changes the way that the Philippians (and other Christians) should act towards one another.

Although Jesus practiced kenosis, does this mean that he emptied himself of the divine attributes of God? The wording of the Christ hymn suggests that Jesus retained these divine attributes even in the midst of his kenosis. The phrase “he emptied himself” (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, v. 7) stands in chiastic relation to Christ’s self-humbling (ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτόν, v. 8); Jesus freely and voluntarily undertook kenosis in order to demonstrate the divine ethic of humility.<sup>34</sup> Christ acted with humility through his kenosis, demonstrating the divine characteristic of humility. The one who existed in the very form of God (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ) voluntarily emptied himself and took on the form of a slave (μορφὴν δούλου), practicing humility through kenosis. Wright argues that Jesus does not cease being God during the incarnation but, rather, empties himself of certain divine privileges and status, emptying that position of its “apparent significance.”<sup>35</sup> Silva contends that the verbs ἐκένωσεν and ἐταπείνωσεν embody the character of Jesus, for he set aside his advantageous position for the advantageous gain of others.<sup>36</sup> He freely and voluntarily “emptied” and “humbled” himself unto the point of death for the sake of the world. This ethic becomes the guiding force for the Christian ethic and lifestyle.

This ethic of humility stands in direct contrast to the ethos of their society, however. Honor was the key virtue in the city of Philippi, with the pursuit of glory, honor, and prestige as one of the most important facets of Roman culture. Because

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34. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 227-28.

35. Wright, “ἀπραγμὸς,” 345. Wright states that Paul typically uses the cognates of κενόω to talk about making something powerless, emptying it of its meaning and significance.

36. Silva, *Philippians*, 104-5.

Philippi was reestablished as a Roman colony and was based upon Roman social customs, it would have a similar mindset in regard to honor and glory. The Roman world was a two-class society made up of wealthy, landed elites who controlled the government and resources, and everybody else (non-elites, freedmen, and slaves).<sup>37</sup> Hellerman demonstrates through archaeological discoveries that “elite males in Roman society engaged in a relentless quest for the acquisition of personal and familial honor.”<sup>38</sup> The Philippian elite, like everyone else in the Roman Empire, competed in the *cursus honorum*, the “Honors Race,” a progression of governmental positions through which one progressed by good works, monetary donations, public works projects, patronage, and sponsorship of games.<sup>39</sup> Leadership was solely based on perception, with those perceived as having the greatest honor and status being promoted to higher levels of leadership and power.

Indeed, Hellerman also contends that this quest for honor was not reserved just for the highest strata of society but was also the social game in which the lower classes, freedmen, and even slaves, competed.<sup>40</sup> Among the non-elite in Philippian society, social position was achieved particularly through donations to voluntary associations and religious cults.<sup>41</sup> Honor was a “public commodity” that was based on how one was perceived by others in society, and all aspects of life were directed towards the gaining

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37. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 6. Hellerman states that the elite made up approximately two percent of the population, while the rest came from the other social strata.

38. Ibid., 111. Hellerman demonstrates through inscriptions, dedications, and tombstones discovered throughout the site of Philippi that individuals lauded their achievements and donations to one another.

39. Ibid, 51. These positions were also limited in the number who could hold an office for a given time and the length that a person could occupy that position.

40. Ibid., 88-109.

41. Ibid., 100-6.



and keeping of honor. Thus the city was a collection of public projects, sponsored monuments, and philanthropic works dedicated towards the retention of prestige.

To the Philippians, who were schooled in the *cursus honorum*, Christ's humility would be a counter-cultural anathema. According to their society, one pursued higher honor and glory, not a greater sense of humility. Paul, however, turns this cultural value on its head. Rather than pursuing "vain glory" (Phil. 2:3, κενοδοξίαν, literally "empty glory"), they were to follow the example of Christ, who emptied himself for the glory of God. Instead of pursuing the *cursus honorum*, Christ deliberately lowered himself to the lowest rung of society, a move that Hellerman describes as the *cursus pudorum*, "the worsening race" or "the way of shame." Jesus showed the ultimate humility by moving not just from the highest level ("equality with God") to the lowest ("the form of a slave"), but also by willingly humiliating himself more by submitting to "the socially degrading experience of crucifixion," the basest and vilest punishment in the Roman Empire.<sup>42</sup> As Paul alludes, this is the basest form of humility and humiliation: "he became obedient to the point of death—all the way to death on a cross" (2:8).

According to Paul, Jesus's kenosis occurred in three stages: his self-consideration of his status; his incarnation, moving from the form of God to the form of a human being and a slave; and his obedient death on the cross, a voluntary humiliation for the sake of humanity.<sup>43</sup> Jesus, through his kenosis, serves as the exemplar of humility. In Greco-Roman society humility was an attitude that was reserved for slaves; it was equated with

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42. Ibid., 130-31.

43. Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 122. Fee adds deeper understanding to this position, contending that it is through these two actions that Christ confronts Greco-Roman societal values: Christ, as God, "did the antithesis of 'selfish ambition' by pouring himself out and becoming a servant, and as a man the antithesis of 'vain conceit' by humbling himself to death on a cross." See Fee, *Philippians*, 187.

“base-mindedness,” “the mind of a slave,” or “a servile attitude.”<sup>44</sup> It is highly appropriate, and slightly ironic, that Jesus takes on the very form of a slave (μορφήν δούλου) to demonstrate that humility to the world. Jesus willingly dies a “slave’s death” as an ongoing revelation of the humility of God.

Jesus’s kenosis and humility are a revelation of the divine character of God. Gorman posits three different ways to interpret the Greek word ὑπάρχων. It can be translated concessively (“though/although in the form of God”), causally (“because/since he was in the form of God”), and temporally (“while/being in the form of God”). Greco-Roman society would view a deity as one who had might and power, able to be wielded to enact his/her own will, judgment, and vengeance. Thus the concessive translation of 2:6-7 would fit that viewpoint: “Although Messiah Jesus was in the form of God, a status that means the exercise of power, he acted *out of* character... when he emptied and humbled himself.”<sup>45</sup> The Philippians would have seen Jesus’s kenosis as counterintuitive, being out of character with their understanding of deity from their cultural perspective while also opposing what they considered an honorable human life. Gorman, however, argues that ὑπάρχων is best understood causally: “Although Messiah Jesus was in the form of God, a status people assume means the exercise of power, he acted *in* character—in a shockingly ungodlike manner according to normal but misguided human perceptions of divinity, contrary to what we would expect but, in fact, in accord with true divinity—when he emptied and humbled himself.”<sup>46</sup> Thus Jesus is the embodiment of God’s deity,

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44. Epictetus, *Discourse* 3.24.56; quoted in Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 129.

45. Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 26.

46. *Ibid.*, 26-27.

and his kenosis is the direct result of his divinity. O'Brien contends that this is the best rendering of the text: "*Precisely because he was in the form of God, he did not regard this divine equality as something to be used for his own advantage.*"<sup>47</sup>

Jesus's divine humility ultimately culminated in his "becoming obedient to death." To whom, however, is Christ obedient? Once again, one must infer from the context of the quotation. Paul stated that Jesus took μορφήν δούλου, the "form of a slave." Slavery implies a master, a person to whose will a slave submits. Older translations saw this as Jesus's obedience to death itself,<sup>48</sup> yet that does not fit the overall context of the hymn, which equates Jesus's humbling himself under God and dying, thus leading to his exaltation (2:9-11). Thus God serves as the master, and it is to God that Jesus becomes obedient. Jesus is obedient to God's will through his voluntary kenosis and humbling unto crucifixion. It is better to understand this passage as the extent to which Christ obeys, even though it leads to death upon a cross.<sup>49</sup> For Romans, crucifixion was seen as the vilest death imaginable, reserved for slaves and criminals. Yet Jesus chose to be obedient to God's will even though it led to this humiliating death; Christ humbled himself to the point of humiliation, illustrating true obedience to God for his followers. This was the implication of Jesus's kenosis. Because he was God, Jesus practiced kenosis. He did not use his position to his advantage but, instead, humbled himself through his incarnation, his obedience, and his crucifixion. Since his kenosis is

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47. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 202-3, 214, emphasis mine. O'Brien, 216, then goes on to state that this is "what it means to be God."

48. Hence the KJV rendering, "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

49. Fowl, *Philippians*, 97-98.

the result of divinity, it can be argued that the crucifixion also serves to illustrate the very character of God Himself.<sup>50</sup>

Through his three-stage kenosis, Jesus reveals the character of God to the world and sets an example for Christians to follow. This is what it means to have the *phronesis* as Christ: to consider oneself in light of God, to practice kenosis and humility, and to become obedient even to the point of death. If Christ, who was the very μορφή of God, acted like this, who are we to do anything less? Instead, we are to let Christ set the example for every aspect of our lives: “Let this be your pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting, which was also displayed in Christ Jesus.”<sup>51</sup>

The hymn makes a startling shift in verse 9. The subject of the hymn switches from Jesus, the actor in verses 6-8, to God, who becomes the primary agent of action in verses 9-11. Paul begins describing the actions of God the Father, who “has highly exalted” and “bestowed the name above every name” upon Christ. Christ now becomes the recipient of action as God “intervenes decisively to exalt his Son.”<sup>52</sup>

Verse 9 begins with the phrase διὸ καὶ, two words that mean “therefore and.” Scholars disagree on how best to understand this passage. Some see Jesus’s exaltation as a reward for his kenosis and crucifixion; others see it in terms of victory over the powers

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50. Wright, “ἀρπαγμὸς,” 346, states, “The real humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that the one who was himself God, and who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a vocation [i.e., kenosis and death on the cross]. The real theological emphasis of the hymn, therefore, is not simply a new view of Jesus. It is a new understanding of God.” Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 4-5, agrees with this sentiment. For Gorman, the cross forms our understanding of Christ and his sacrifice, as well as God and his merciful love. The cross becomes the heart of the Christian faith and the content of the Christian lifestyle.

51. Ibid., 88.

52. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 212.

of evil.<sup>53</sup> Fee argues that verses 9-11 are understood in terms of vindication, that God is making things right after the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>54</sup> A better translation of the phrase *διὸ καὶ* would be “that is why.” This translation demonstrates a sense of reciprocity in which God responds, based on Christ’s obedience, exalting him and bestowing upon him a position and name of honor and authority.<sup>55</sup> Just as Jesus’s kenosis is a demonstration of the character of God, so, too, is God’s exaltation of Christ. It is precisely because of Jesus’s kenosis and its direct relation to the character of God that leads to Jesus’s exaltation, which is also in direct relation to the character and glory of God. It demonstrates a divine paradox: the one who becomes a slave is exalted by all humanity as Lord. Jesus demonstrates both aspects of God’s character, his lordship and his service, his power and his humility. These two ideas would be diametrically opposed to one another in the cultural milieu of the Philippian believers, yet they are integrally intertwined in the life of God. Through verses 9-11, Paul is demonstrating the vindication of Christ in which kenosis leads to exaltation, albeit in a manner that stands opposed to the *cursus honorum* that was prevalent in Roman society: the humble *δοῦλος* becomes the exalted *κύριος*.

For Paul, Jesus’s kenosis stands as the model for the Christian lifestyle. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus” (2:5).<sup>56</sup> Paul is telling the Philippians to pattern their lives on Christ, even though

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53. Fee, *Philippians*, 220ff.

54. Ibid. Also Fowl, *Philippians*, 100-101; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 232-235.

55. See Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 231-235, especially 232; Silva, *Philippians*, 108-109; and O’Brien, *Philippians*, 233.

56. I also like the emphasis given by Fowl in his translation of this passage: “Let this be your pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling, which was also displayed in Christ Jesus.” Fowl, *Philippians*, 88.

it stands in contrast to the ethics of their society. As followers of Jesus, they ought to develop this same *phronesis* in their own lives. Paul commands them “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ” (1:27). He calls them to have “the same mind” (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε) and to be of “one mind” (τὸ ἓν φρονοῦντες, 2:2), calling them to the imitation of Christ in their treatment of one another. As Paul writes,

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, and participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus.

There are strong parallels between this text and the Christ narrative that comes next, including a call to “humility” (2:3) with Christ as the illustration (2:7, 8); the pursuit of vain glory (2:3) in relation to Christ who emptied himself and was subsequently exalted, bringing glory to God (2:9, 11), and, of course, the *phronesis* of unity (2:2) and having the *phronein* of Christ (2:5). In order for the church to live with this united *phronesis*, the members must learn to be conformed to the image of Christ. Rather than pursue their own glory and honor, they must learn to pursue the pattern of Christ. This means putting aside their own ἐπιθεία and κenoδοξία in order to pursue the mind of Christ.<sup>57</sup>

This *phronesis* should also change the way they interact with those outside of the church and with their society as a whole. Paul wants their “manner of life [to] be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27) so that they might “shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life” (2:15b-16).

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57. As O’Brien, *Philippians*, 179-182, points out, these words stand in contrast to the rest of the epistle. The word ἐπιθείαν was already used in 1:17 to talk about the selfish ambition of rival preachers in Rome. And the κenoδοξία stands in marked contrast to the real glory of God that is discussed in relation to God (1:11; 2:11; 4:19, 20) and Christ (3:21).

*Phronesis* is, at its core, a reassessment of values. Paul's prayer for the Philippians is "that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (1:9-10 NIV). Paul calls them to discernment about what is best, a reassessment of the values of their lives. Paul calls them to move beyond the *cursus honorum*, seeking honor in the ways of Christ rather than in the paradigms of their culture. Paul also calls them to humility, which is at odds with the society in which they live. What Paul wants is that their "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27) and that they should "have this mind among [themselves] which is [theirs] in Christ Jesus" (2:5). Thus Paul's call to *phronesis* is a reassessment of the values of their heart.

The letter, then, serves a parenetic function: they are to imitate Christ by taking on the same *phronesis* in their lives and in their relations to one another. At its core, the epistle to the Philippians is meant not just to inform or encourage these Christians but, instead, to mold their behavior and their wisdom. As Gorman contends, "The purpose of Paul's letters ... is pastoral or spiritual before it is theological. Today we might speak of his goal as spiritual formation."<sup>58</sup> Those who are practicing spiritual formation are developing a Christlike *phronesis* in their lives. Through their time spent with God, Christians pattern their lives on the example of Christ in his kenosis, obedience, humility, and cruciformity, which will help them become more like Christ.

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58. Ibid., *Cruciformity*, 4. In *Inhabiting*, 1-2, Gorman relates spiritual formation to *theosis*, the process of becoming more and more like God to the point of divinization. As the mind of Christ continues to develop in the individual that imitates Christ, that person becomes more and more conformed to the pattern of the cross. Thus, kenosis leads to *theosis*, "participation in the very life of God."

Paul holds up three examples of individuals who live in accordance with a Christian *phronesis*. First, Paul uses Timothy to illustrate this mindset in 2:19-24, saying that he has “no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for [their] welfare. For they seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (2:20-21). Timothy becomes the exemplar of Paul’s command to “count others more significant than [themselves]” (2:3) and to look after “the interests of others” (2:4). Timothy demonstrates the attitude of Christ in his life and ministry. Second, Paul reminds them of Epaphroditus in 2:25-30, a “brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier,” one of their own Christian community who was sent to Paul. Epaphroditus endured illness and “risked his life” for “the work of Christ” (2:30). Epaphroditus is presented as one who puts the needs of the Gospel above his own health.

Finally, Paul uses his own life as an example of the Christian mindset. In 3:2-14 Paul presents himself as an exemplar of kenosis, which he does by sharing the stories of his own life. He crafts his own life narrative around the phrase ἡγήομαι, which he employs three times in the text (3:7, 8 twice). Paul is directly alluding to the Christ hymn in which Jesus considered his status and, ultimately, rejected it in order to fulfill the will of God. Paul’s own story becomes a tangible interpretation of this ethic. Although he had every advantage by virtue of his birth, Paul now considers everything apart from Christ to be “rubbish.” These advantages are all a loss (ζημία), even damaging to developing the *phronesis* of Christ. The confidence Paul had in the flesh had built up a sense of pride. This was a sentiment that would have been understood by the Philippians, who lived by the rules and regulations of the *cursus honorum*. But for Paul, these things that were once considered to his gain are now his loss.



Paul uses accounting language to show the sudden “re-evaluation of values” in Christ.<sup>59</sup> His old advantages that were a gain (κέρδος) are now losses (ζημία) in comparison to the gain he finds in Christ. Nothing is more important than “gaining Christ” (v. 8) and “shar[ing] in his sufferings” (v. 10). The things that he once considered an advantage are now nothing in terms of his relationship with Christ; he has gained far more through his recognition of Jesus as his Lord. For Paul, this is a personal relationship: “ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου” (3:8), which also serves to tie back into the language of the lordship of Christ in 2:11. This personal knowledge of Jesus’s lordship in his life also lets him know Christ and the power of his resurrection (3:10).

In Philippians 3:12-15, he reminds them that he has not perfectly developed this *phronesis*, but he continues striving in this manner “because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” Thus Paul “forget[s] what is behind and strain[s] forward to what lies ahead” (3:13), seeking to attain the godly goal in Christ Jesus. He then tells the Philippians, “let all of us who are mature think this way” (ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν); literally, be of “the same mind.” Rather than becoming enemies of the cross of Christ, whose *phronein* is set on earthly things, Paul reminds them that their “citizenship is in heaven” (3:19). These three individuals serve as personal, tangible examples of the ultimate kenosis of Christ Jesus and demonstrate the *phronesis* that Paul wants them to follow.

Paul also points to two of their number who need to practice a Christian *phronesis*. Although nothing is known of these two women, many scholars think they are

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59. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 382-391; Fowl, *Philippians*, 152-53.

two leaders in the Philippian church.<sup>60</sup> Paul calls them *συνεργῶν*, “co-laborers,” who have “labored side by side with [him] in the gospel” (4:3). Regardless of whether they held formal positions of leadership, these two women were evidently prominent and influential, and their disagreement could erode the unity of the church. Paul reiterates the phrase *αὐτὸ φρονεῖν*, “the same mind.” Here he specifically adds the phrase *ἐν κυρίῳ*, “in the Lord.” Paul is not calling them to simply “get along” or “get over it”; instead, he reminds them of the fellowship they share through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>61</sup> They become examples of how Christian *phronesis* ought to shape the life of their current congregation.

Thus every aspect of Paul’s letter—from Paul’s imprisonment to the discussion of Christ’s kenosis to the positive examples of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, and the negative example of Euodia and Syntyche—serves to help develop this same *phronesis* in the Philippian church so that they can “walk worthily” and live faithfully.<sup>62</sup> This Christian mindset is patterned after the life of Jesus Christ, whom Paul elevates as the exemplar of this lifestyle. Paul wants them to have the same *phronesis* as Christ in every aspect of their lives.

The letter should, thus, have the same effect on us as Christians today in the twenty-first century. Although this letter is written to the context of the Philippian

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60. Bockmuehl, *Epistle*, 238, is representative of this position.

61. Fowl, *Philippians*, 178, states, “The common pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting that Paul advocates here is shaped and directed by Euodia’s and Syntyche’s common connection in the Lord. Theirs is a friendship constituted and formed by a common friendship with Christ. Hence, a rupture in the friendship between Euodia and Syntyche also affects their friendship with Christ.”

62. Stephen E. Fowl, “Christology and Ethics in Philippians 2:5-11,” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 141, 145. As Fowl writes, “Paul is trying to form in the Philippians the intellectual and moral abilities to be able to deploy their knowledge of the gospel in concrete situations in which they find themselves, so that they will be able to live faithfully (or “walk worthily” 1:27).”

Christians circa 62 CE, Paul's calling to a Christlike *phronesis* is a universal challenge for Christians. The pattern of kenosis, humility, and obedience that leads to death to self is just as scandalous today as it was two thousand years ago. A Christlike *phronesis* is countercultural and paradoxical. As Eldin Villafañe writes, "The challenge to the church today—to Christian discipleship—is ... to demonstrate a Christian *phronesis* by means of a kenosis. It is to make evident a Christian mindset that is willing to exercise self-emptying—one that is willing to surrender its prestige, its prerogative, and, yes, its power in favor of redemptive and liberating purposes."<sup>63</sup>

Christ is the model of obedience that we, as Christians, should follow. Jesus considered his own status as the *μορφή* of God and decided that it mattered less than fulfilling God's will. He willingly humbled himself, emptying himself of every advantage for the sake of being obedient to God as a slave to his will. Jesus did all of this knowing that it would lead to the ultimate humiliation: obedience to the point of death on a cross. Yet Jesus did it to demonstrate the divine character, demonstrating God's self-sacrifice through his own actions. As Christians, this is the life that we should strive for. But this also requires us to humble ourselves, counting everything that we once held dear as nothing in comparison to what we gain through Christ. We must be willing to pattern our lives on the *phronesis* of Christ in the way we perceive God, the means that we interact with one another, and the manner we interact with our world. If this is the pattern that all Christians should emulate, then it stands to reason that spiritual leaders in the church are called to be exemplars of this *phronetic* lifestyle. This is what it means to be a spiritual

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63. Eldin Villafañe, "The Christian Mind-set and Postmodernity: Lessons from Paul's Letter to the Philippians," in *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 10.

leader: to develop the *phronesis* of Christ in our own lives and to help others do the same. The best method for achieving this Christlike *phronesis* is through spiritual formation that leads to a different consideration of spiritual leadership.

### **Theology of Spiritual Leadership**

At the core of this intervention is the idea of spiritual leadership. What does it mean to be a spiritual leader, and how does that stand in contrast to other forms of leadership practiced in politics, corporations, institutions, and even the church? It is through the *phronesis* of Christ that this distinction is best understood.

Leadership is, simply, “a relationship of influence in which one person seeks to influence the vision, the values, the attitudes, and the behaviors of another.”<sup>64</sup> While helpful, this definition leaves a lot of questions unanswered. It permits different types of influence, both positive and negative. It does not speak to a vision that is achieved, nor towards a goal that is helpful rather than harmful. According to Wright’s definition, leadership is nothing more than the ability to influence others towards one’s own desires.

Arthur Boers expands on this understanding of leadership from a religious perspective. As he surveyed current leadership literature, Boers ascertained that Christians defined leaders in terms of people with charismatic or forceful personalities, people who have influence and a following, people who “get things done,” and people who possess vision. Additionally, many people do not see themselves as leaders because they do not possess these qualities.<sup>65</sup>

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64. Wright, “Introduction,” 3.

65. Arthur Boers, *Servants and Fools: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), Kindle, KL 651-76, 699.

Spiritual leadership, however, takes on a different focus. Spiritual leadership keeps the values, behaviors, and vision of God as its focus. Boers contends that motivation for change and the process of transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit, and leaders are those who simply look for the Spirit's prompting and leadership. Leaders are followers of Jesus that "channel" God's vision to his people, and encourage them to live lives of faithful service to the Lord.<sup>66</sup> Spiritual leadership still requires influence, but it is the ability to influence another toward God's *telos*, or end-goal. Spiritual leaders are those who are being influenced by God, being transformed to be more like him. This process of influence and transformation is primarily achieved through spiritual formation, time spent in the presence of God. These leaders can then help the church be spiritually formed into the image of Christ. Thus the goal of leadership is to help people become more like Christ.<sup>67</sup>

Leadership is about influence, and spiritual leadership is about influencing people to become more like Christ. Yet there are many different models for how this type of leadership can be practiced within a congregation. These include a pyramid model, a reverse pyramid model, and a missional model of leadership. I will briefly describe these models below.

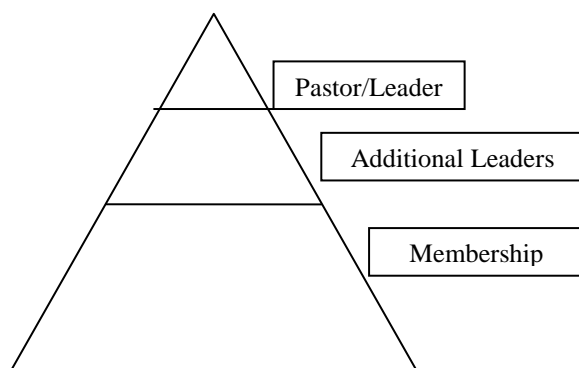
Many churches practice a hierarchical, top-down form of leadership, represented by a pyramid, shown in Figure 1.

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66. Ibid., KL 715.

67. Christopher Beeley states this in his book on spiritual leadership: "Among the many demands that leaders face, the main purpose of pastoral ministry is to guide people toward God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything that we do as leaders should reflect this purpose. All our work of administration, planning, socializing, and even presiding and preaching at worship is focused on helping people to come to know and love God more fully." See Christopher Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 54.

**Figure 1: Pyramid Model** <sup>68</sup>



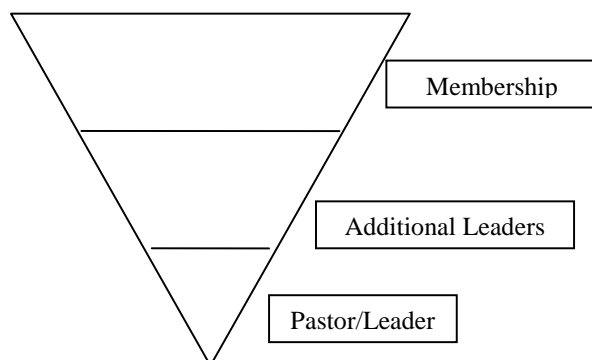
This leadership model places the minister or pastor on top, supported by other leaders, and bolstered by the congregation. In some instances the organization exists for the benefit of the leader, who exercises a top-down approach to leadership and ministry. This facilitates decision-making and vision-casting because the leaders set the agenda for the congregation as a whole. While this facilitates strong leadership, it also is vulnerable to abuse. It sees the church in terms of hierarchy, which does not benefit those who are lower on the pyramid.

Another form of Christian leadership is the inverted pyramid, in which the leaders serve the membership of the congregation from a position of servant leadership, represented by figure 2:

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68. This is often referred to as the hierarchical model of leadership, with the head leaders of an organization passing orders down to their subordinates. This figure is adapted from a model that is refuted in Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 3rd ed. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2002), 74-79.

**Figure 2: Inverted Pyramid Model** <sup>69</sup>



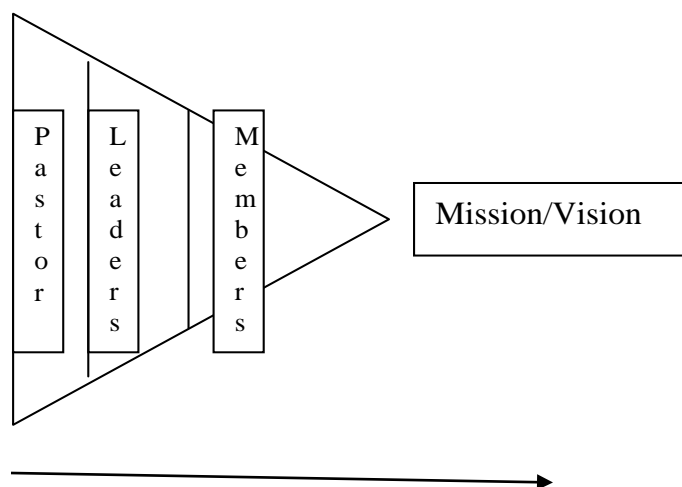
This model is often referred to as the “servant leadership” model, and it provides numerous benefits over the pyramid model. In the servant leadership model, leaders provide support, encouragement, and edification to the organization. These leaders serve as teachers, servants, and mentors for others. It implies, however, that the leaders inherently possess the necessary knowledge and skills for this task. This can lead to stress and burnout for those in positions of leadership.

A third model of leadership is the missional leadership model. This model turns the pyramid on its side, implying a greater sense of equity among the members. It also points the congregation forward toward a stated goal of spirituality and vision. This is represented by figure 3:

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69. Adapted from Larry C. Spears, “The Understanding and Practice of Servant-Leadership,” a paper presented to Servant Leadership Research Roundtable, Regent University, August 2005, 6. Online resource located at [https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/sl\\_proceedings/2005/spears\\_practice.pdf](https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/sl_proceedings/2005/spears_practice.pdf). Last accessed March 15, 2016.

**Figure 3: Missional Leadership Model**<sup>70</sup>



While not well represented in this figure, this model of leadership developed by Guder contends that all members play a vital role in moving the congregation forward toward a specific mission/vision; in Guder's model, this mission is to be an eschatological community that integrates faith, hope, and love into the fabric of its DNA.<sup>71</sup>

Originally, in the course of this intervention, I was working with the missional leadership model as my foundation. Over the course of the intervention, however, I began to see problems with this model of leadership for our definition of spiritual leadership. Through the course of my research and the ongoing interactions with the CDT, we determined that this model simply did not meet the criteria of spiritual leadership from which we were working. In our understanding, spiritual leaders are those who are developing the *phronesis* of Christ through spiritual formation and are helping others do

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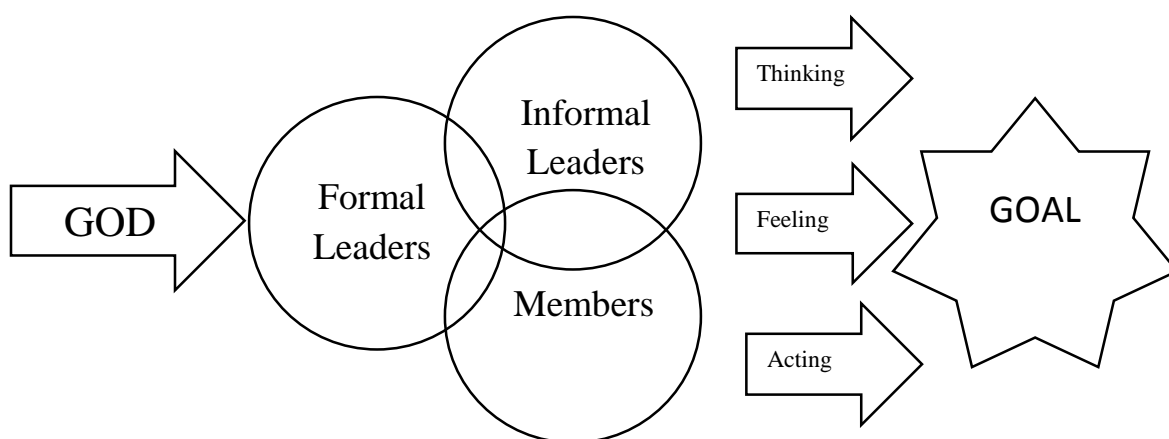
70. This model is adapted from the missional leadership model developed by Darrell L. Guder et al., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 204-20.

71. Ibid.



the same. The missional leadership model fit part of this definition in that it worked with a vision or goal in mind. The model neglected to incorporate spiritual formation and God's influence into the actual model, however. Thus, it was necessary for us to create our own model of spiritual leadership for the purpose of this project, which is represented in figure 4:

**Figure 4: Spiritual Leadership Model**



This model takes into consideration the ongoing influence of God through spiritual formation and the need for leadership to help others be spiritually formed as well. This process leads towards a goal of Christian *phronesis* that is inherent in the lives of the congregants and moves the church towards God's *telos* for his people. This model of spiritual leadership takes seriously the development of a Christian *phronesis* in the lives of leaders. The goal of this model is to acknowledge that leaders have roles and responsibilities that are unique from others in the congregation, but also that everyone else has a part to play. Leaders are being shaped into the image of Christ through spiritual

formation, and they are then helping others to be spiritually formed as well.<sup>72</sup> Spiritual leaders are those who are developing the *phronesis* of Christ in their own lives, imitating him in their thinking, obedience, kenosis, and humility.

### ***Phronesis* and Spiritual Leadership**

Paul addresses this epistle not just to the Philippian church as a whole but also to the “overseers and deacons” of the congregation(s). Although Paul wants all Christians to develop this *phronesis* patterned after Christ, he also suggests that the spiritual leaders of the congregation should exemplify this lifestyle to their congregants. Paul’s use of three positive examples (Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Paul himself) and one negative example (the relationship between two leaders, Euodia and Syntyche) demonstrates the importance of *phronetic* spiritual leadership. Ultimately, these leaders serve as patterns of a Christlike *phronesis* in leadership that are meant to be emulated by the others.

The New Testament, as a whole, has very little to say about Christian leadership. Paul himself rarely mentions congregational leaders when writing his letters of theological and moral instruction. Christian leaders, then, should be those who demonstrate a greater maturity in their imitation of Christ. Spiritual leaders are those who have developed a cruciform *phronesis* in their own lives and, consequently, are helping others develop that same pattern in their lives. As James Thompson states,

“Leadership in the Pauline communities was inseparable from the life of sacrifice first demonstrated by the Christ who abandoned divine prerogatives and ‘emptied himself’ for the sake of others (Phil. 2:7). The sign of Paul’s legitimacy as an apostle and servant of Christ was his

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72. This model would also acknowledge the fact that God is at work in the hearts and lives of others in the congregation. Spiritual formation is not the sole right and responsibility of a congregation’s formal leadership. Rather, God is at work in the lives of all people, and the ways in which we intersect with one another and share what God is doing help one another grow to have a more Christlike *phronesis* and be spiritually formed.

participation in the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 4:10; cf. 6:4; 11:23). Those who continue Paul's task also deny themselves for the sake of others."<sup>73</sup>

Kenosis, then, is the legitimate sign of *phronetic*, spiritual leadership. Spiritual leaders are those who are undergoing spiritual formation as God works through the Spirit in their hearts in a variety of ways. Kenosis is an important aspect of spiritual formation because we have to allow God to work within us so that we can empty ourselves of pride, sin, and power, among other things, and fill us up with the Spirit, making us more like him.

Christian *phronesis* starts with the end goal in mind. The goal of the Christian life is to be conformed more and more to the pattern of Christ. This is the pattern of thinking, acting, and being to which Paul calls the Philippians. For Paul, this is true wisdom and true leadership. In chapter 4, Paul calls on two leaders within the church (Euodia and Syntyche) to "be of the same mind," or *phronesis*, by emptying themselves of their pride, ambition, and selfishness. Paul is calling them to imitate the pattern of Christ in their own lives, specifically in regard to one another. Even leaders need to continue developing in their own *phronesis* as they come to grips with the reality of being conformed to the image of Christ.<sup>74</sup> The end goal of the Christian life is to be patterned after Christ. Thus Christian *phronesis* begins with spiritual formation that forms the foundation of a life patterned on the kenosis of Jesus.

Paul's work in Philippi serves as a prime example of Christian leadership with Christlike *phronesis* at its core. Paul calls these self-focused individuals into a community that is shaped by the story of Christ and is being shaped continually into this

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73. James W. Thompson, *The Church according to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 241-42.

74. This paragraph was shaped, in part, by the thoughts of Carson Reed, "The Ends of Leadership: Phronesis and the Leader as Guide," a paper presented at the Fourth Annual Institute for Leadership and Ethics Conference, Evangelical Theologische Faculteit, May 2015, in Leuven, Belgium.

cruciform pattern in their lifestyles, ethics, and relationships. Thompson contends that Paul's command to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:14) is the language of spiritual formation. This is the spiritual formation of these Christians done by the guidance of the Spirit and congregational spiritual leaders as they share the story of Christ and seek to be conformed to his *phronesis*.<sup>75</sup>

Thus Paul demonstrates that *phronesis*, spiritual formation, and leadership are indelibly intertwined. Leaders can lead only to the same degree that they are conformed to the image of Christ. Seidel contends that leadership and spiritual formation are symbiotic in nature: spiritual leaders can only help transform the congregation if they themselves are undergoing spiritual formation.<sup>76</sup>

Spiritual formation is "our continuing response to the reality of God's grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world."<sup>77</sup> It is an ongoing process in which we partner with the Trinitarian God to draw closer to God and be transformed more and more into God's likeness. This takes place primarily through participation in various experiences and practices that deepen our relationship with God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These practices help one be conformed to the pattern of Christ.

*Phronesis*, at its core, is a reassessment of values. It calls us to an evaluation of our hearts and lives to see what is out of line with the desires of God. Throughout the

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75. James W. Thompson, "Paul, the Elders and Spiritual Formation," in *Good Shepherds: More Guidance for the Gentle Art of Pastoring*, eds. David Fleer and Charles Siburt (Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2007), 37.

76. Andrew Seidel, "Leadership and Spiritual Formation," in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 177.

77. Greenman, "Spiritual Formation," 24.

epistle, Paul calls them to a reassessment of their values as he focuses on their thinking and their acting. Paul illustrates this through his prayer: “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (1:9-10). He calls them to a “manner of life worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). Throughout the rest of the gospel, Paul calls them to a conformity of mind and action that imitates the *phronesis* of Jesus.

The spiritual leadership curriculum seeks to change cognition through biblical study. The curriculum also challenges the participants to implement what they are learning in their lives. The spiritual practices that accompany each session help facilitate this cognitive change. These spiritual practices get to the heart of *phronetic* development. If *phronesis* is a reassessment of values centered on a pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting, then we must also address the heart of the participants. In my own life, spiritual formation practices are vital for my own self-examination and self-reflection. Practices such as humility, Sabbath, examen, and others stand in contrast to the desires of the heart, which can often be selfish or petty. Spiritual practices challenge the faulty thoughts of our minds, the deceptive feelings of our hearts, and the selfish actions of our lives. Thus spiritual practices help us develop a Christlike *phronesis* because they call us outside of ourselves to think, feel, and act with the wisdom of God.

Spiritual leadership starts with the heart of the leader.<sup>78</sup> Most leaders are chosen originally for their perceived expertise in business or life; they are seemingly people of

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78. Reggie McNeal calls spiritual formation “heart-shaping” that takes place in six significant arenas: culture, call, community, communion, conflict, and the commonplace. See Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xix, xxi-xxiii.

honor. Congregational leaders are often thought to understand spiritual formation and already be applying these practices in their lives. Many congregational leaders are lost on how to practice spiritual formation and implement spiritual practices in their own lives, however. Thus we need to “strengthen the soul of our leadership,”<sup>79</sup> helping them be conformed to the *phronesis* of Christ. They need to deepen their relationship with God, allowing him to fill their hearts and souls so that this communion overflows into their life and leadership. Spiritual leaders will reach their potential only to the degree that they are connected to the source of living water. Thus leaders must continually be conformed to the *phronesis* of Christ through spiritual formation.

Also, these leaders must practice humility in their own lives. Rather than pursuing personal ambition or gain, spiritual leaders should practice kenosis and humility that seeks the good of others. The glory of God is more important than the pursuit of “empty glory” through self-promotion or selfish ambition. Instead, leaders seek the glory of God and the imitation of Christ in their own lives and in the life of the church and its members.

Thus spiritual leaders must model a life of spiritual formation for the congregation. Gregory of Nyssa compares the difference in worldly leadership and biblical leadership with a metaphor: magnificent but dry aqueducts versus wooden pipes filled with water. Although one is impressive on the outside, it is ultimately useless. The church needs leaders who are connected to the source of living water<sup>80</sup> and are helping quench the spiritual thirst of the congregation. Only those who have connected with God

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79. This language is taken from Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 15.

80. Ibid, 29.

intimately in their own lives can help others do the same.<sup>81</sup> Spiritual leaders must seek to connect with God through both the personal and communal practice of spiritual disciplines. They must also encourage the congregation to do the same.

The WUCC wants to develop deeper spiritual leaders to provide guidance for our congregation. We need leaders who are conformed to the image of Christ and are practicing spiritual formation, manifesting itself in kenosis and *phronesis* in their own lives. Thus we need to develop an intentional plan and curriculum to help our leaders develop a deeper spirituality that helps them be conformed to the image of Christ. Only through their personal cruciformity can our leaders help the church develop a Christian *phronesis* that guides our lives.

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81. Ibid., 87-98. Barton equates the spiritual life to a journey and spiritual leaders to guides. She says that the best guide for a spiritual journey “is one who has made the journey him- or herself ... and thus knows something about the terrain, the climate, the beauties, dangers and challenges present at each point along the way.” Only those who have spent time with God in the joys and pains of life have the ability to guide others through similar spiritual moments.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

In chapter 1 I described the context of the West University Church of Christ, outlining the need for an intentional curriculum of spiritual leadership development for the congregation. In chapter 2 I outlined a theology of *phronesis*, spiritual leadership, and spiritual formation from Philippians 2:5-11 as the foundation of a theology of spiritual formation for the congregation. Spiritual leaders should have a *phronesis*, or pattern of wisdom and action, that is based on the example of Christ. Leaders must continue developing this *phronesis* in their own lives, becoming more cruciform in the way they think, act, speak, and lead. This requires a deeper connection to God through various spiritual practices that help individuals be conformed and transformed to be more like God, a process of spiritual formation. Thus spiritual formation is the key component of spiritual leadership development.

In chapter 3 I will describe the methodology and intervention that I used to develop this curriculum of spiritual leadership development through spiritual formation.

#### **Methodology of the Project**

I selected qualitative research methodology as the means by which this project is be implemented and evaluated. Qualitative research is “a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world. It produces formal statements or conceptual



frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world, and therefore comprises knowledge that is practically useful for those who work with issues around learning and adjustment to the pressures and demands of the social world.”<sup>1</sup> Qualitative research is an interpretation of meaning, specifically the meaning and significance understood by those who are a natural part of the system or process that is being studied.<sup>2</sup> Qualitative research uses a variety of techniques and methods to gain understanding and make meaning of the particular situation that is in question. These techniques include, but are not limited to, ethnography, interviews, field notes, case studies, and other empirical materials.<sup>3</sup> Qualitative research allows the researcher to examine a complex system such as a congregation through a variety of research methods and then, in turn, to evaluate, interpret, and apply those data to specific interventions for the continued health of the church.

This project is a specific form of qualitative research, namely, participatory action research (PAR). PAR directly engages and empowers a group drawn from the institution that is being studied. It “provides a framework in which people move from being the *objects* of research to *subjects* and *co-researchers*.”<sup>4</sup> Through PAR, members of the congregation take an active role in shaping the research and intervention, thereby giving them power and control to help shape the institution. These participants then help develop

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1. John McLeod, *Qualitative Research in Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001), 3.

2. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005), 3.

3. Ibid., 3-4.

4. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 228.

an intervention to approach the specific problem that is being addressed. In the context of the West University Church, this problem is the lack of an intentional curriculum of spiritual leadership development.

### **Format of the Project Intervention**

The goal of this project was to work together with a selected group of individuals from WUCC to write a curriculum for spiritual leadership development. This curriculum uses the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 as a vision for spiritual leadership. The project also utilized various spiritual formation practices as a method for promoting spiritual growth. The intervention consisted of a weekend retreat and nine weekly sessions in which I led this small group through the process of curriculum development.

### ***Intervention Participants***

One of the intervention's primary needs was a group of six participants to help design this curriculum. I chose the members of this curriculum development team (CDT). This project utilized purposive sampling in order to select these individuals from within the congregation.<sup>5</sup> I wanted to obtain a variety of perspectives while also keeping the group small and manageable. There were also specific variables (i.e., background in education and spiritual maturity) that were necessary for the intervention. Thus purposive sampling was the most useful construct for the context of this intervention. The members of the CDT were chosen based on a variety of criteria, including diversity, spiritual maturity, leadership, and expertise.

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5. Purposive sampling is also called "purposeful sampling." It is the utilization of information-rich cases or individuals that provide more information to illuminate the questions under study in a deeper and more comprehensive way. See Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1990), 169-82.

*Diversity:* While WUCC seems homogenous on the surface, the congregation's membership is quite diverse in terms of background, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic level.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the church consists of different ages, genders, and life stages. The members of this group were chosen to help reflect some of the diversity that is present in the church. I also intentionally chose people of different ages and backgrounds to work together on this team.

*Spiritual Maturity:* Due to the nature of this project, these participants must have already demonstrated spirituality and spiritual maturity in their own lives. While this can be difficult to ascertain, members were chosen based on the practice of various spiritual formation techniques in their own lives and the demonstration of a level of spiritual maturity through their relationship with God and others.

*Leadership:* Rather than work with the congregation's formal leadership to develop this curriculum, I sought individuals in the church who demonstrated leadership or leadership potential through service, teaching, love, or prayer.

*Expertise:* I also sought out a number of individuals who had a background in education or served in positions of leadership in their community or career.<sup>7</sup> The elders and staff at WUCC served as key informants in this process, helping me ascertain which members could best serve as participants in this project.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Refer to ch. 1 for a complete description of this diversity.

7. There are a significant number of members at the WUCC who have degrees in education and have served in various capacities in schools at the local and district level. This includes the congregation's youth minister.

8. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation*, 263, defines key informants as "people who are particularly knowledgeable and articulate—people whose insights can prove particularly useful in helping an observer understand what is happening."

These participants had to be willing to covenant together to participate fully in the project. This included practicing the spiritual disciplines daily, reading the assigned material, researching, and encouraging one another throughout the week. Each member of the CDT was expected to participate in the spiritual practices and read the assigned research material. They also had to be willing to lead within the group, taking on various roles of leadership (i.e., leading the spiritual practice reflection, serving as secretary, holding one another accountable, etc.)

As the researcher, I provided the resources necessary for the CDT to succeed. I wrote the retreat materials, helping the group understand spiritual leadership, spiritual formation, and the theology of Philippians and the Christ hymn. Each week I set the topic and the agenda for the group, preparing research materials that would be sent home with the CDT members. I also decided which spiritual disciplines would be practiced each week. I also asked the CDT to participate in various ways, from leading the discussion, to writing portions of the curriculum, to serving as secretary during the sessions. Each week I also worked to keep the CDT focused on the task at hand, reminding us of the theology of Philippians and spiritual leadership and calling us back to the purpose of each session. Overall, I initiated and shaped the project, but the CDT's insights and interactions expanded and transformed the intervention and final product.

### ***Description of the Intervention***

Late in the summer of 2015, I asked the elders and associate minister to help identify individuals within the congregation who fit these criteria. I also outlined the expectations that would be placed on these individuals. I wanted to glean their insight in order to get an appropriate sample from throughout the congregation, making sure I

incorporated a number of different perspectives. These leaders created a list of fifteen names of individuals from within WUCC that they thought would best serve in this capacity. After praying about the list and considering the individuals, I approached eight of them about the possibility to joining the CDT.

Approximately six weeks before the intervention was set to begin, I approached these eight individuals and invited them to participate in this intervention. I sent each potential team member an email outlining the intervention, and relating the time commitments involved in the process. Each participant was asked to prayerfully consider becoming part of this team and to respond within two weeks. I then arranged a personal meeting with these individuals in order to discuss the project in detail and answer any questions that they might have. Of those eight, six initially agreed to become participants in the curriculum development team. Two participants declined due to time restraints in their schedules. Another participant, Linda, agreed initially but then obtained a position teaching evening courses in a local university, making it impossible for her to participate. Five individuals accepted the invitation to participate, and they were invited to the introductory retreat.

The following individuals, introduced below, represented a cross-section of the congregation in terms of age, background, race, and gender:<sup>9</sup>

Allen is an African-American male in his early thirties. He has a master's degree in political science. He is the son of a minister and grew up in the Churches of Christ. He is married to a woman from Belgium, and they have one child. He regularly serves as a substitute Bible class teacher and in our local ministry to a retirement community.

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9. In order to protect anonymity, the names of the CDT members have been changed.

Vicky is a white female in her late forties. Her husband is a deacon in our congregation. She was raised in a Church of Christ, but she has also been a member of Methodist and independent churches. She has been married almost thirty years, and they have two married children. Vicky has served as a teacher both in the United States and with an international school in Malaysia, and she currently serves as an educational coach and coordinator for a local non-profit organization.

Don is a white male in his mid-sixties. He was converted to the Churches of Christ in junior high and he attended a Christian college. Don has been married for more than forty years, and he has three children and many grandchildren. He has served as an elder in two previous congregations; he moved to Houston approximately two years ago to become the head of a local government organization, where he serves as the CEO.

Sara is a white female in her mid-thirties. She is married, and her husband is a deacon in our congregation; they have three children. She is an architect that specializes in church construction; thus she works with many different churches in many backgrounds. Sara was raised Baptist, but came to the Churches of Christ through her husband.

Oliver is a Hispanic male in his mid-fifties. He was raised in the Catholic Church and converted in his mid-forties. Oliver is divorced and he has three teenage children. He helps with a number of youth and children's ministry events.

These five individuals formed the core of the CDT, working together over the course of this intervention to develop the curriculum.

***Retreat***<sup>10</sup>

The project began with a retreat that took place on October 9 and 10, 2015. The goal of this retreat was to outline the theology of the project so that all of the members of the CDT would operate from the same theological framework. The retreat took place at the WUCC building, which provided the necessary facilities and resources for the retreat. I provided dinner on Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and snacks for the breaks. Childcare was provided by one of the teens from the church who watched over three children. All of the other materials (i.e., paper, printing, journals, technology, etc.) came from the congregation's adult education budget.

The retreat took place on Friday evening and Saturday morning. Friday's sessions lasted approximately three hours, and the sessions on Saturday lasted approximately four and a half hours. There were five sessions spread out over those two days. For the retreat I provided a notebook of notes and readings to best facilitate the discussion with the CDT. These notes ran concurrent with the lessons and provided a resource for them to use both during the retreat and during the curriculum development sessions.

The retreat began with a short time of worship and prayer on Friday evening. Afterwards, we discussed the intervention in its scope and the expectations placed on the CDT members. I passed out copies of the informed consent form and explained each part, answering any questions they had.<sup>11</sup> The participants then signed the forms and returned them. At that point, we began our first sessions together.

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10. The retreat schedule is outlined in Appendix B.

11. This form is found in Appendix A.

The first session discussed the difference between secular and spiritual leadership. The CDT was asked to describe the characteristics and qualities of a good leader, and as a group we discussed their statements. All of the participants were also asked to give examples of good leaders. The CDT listed leadership characteristics such as people skills, wisdom, ability to make decisions quickly, and knowledge. Their views were similar to how many describe strong, natural leaders. Strong, secular leadership is often described in terms of innate qualities such as charisma, knowledge, and attractiveness. While these leadership characteristics are not negative, they do not necessarily equate to good spiritual leadership. Next, we discussed the qualities and characteristics of spiritual leaders and how they differ from natural leaders.<sup>12</sup> We looked at three different models of spiritual leadership and discussed which was the most effective in congregational ministry.<sup>13</sup> Specifically, we examined the missional leadership model and its emphasis on moving together toward God's goal. In this model, leadership is based on becoming who God wants us to be. The vision and mission are God's, determined by God's desired outcome. God determines the mission, and God raises up leaders. Leadership, then, is about inspiring and guiding the congregation toward God's preferred future. We discussed this definition of spiritual leadership, and then I asked the CDT to talk about individuals that they believe fit this understanding of leadership. From there, we talked about how Jesus serves as the ultimate model of spiritual leadership, and I introduced the

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12. Much of this discussion was built from Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 213-24. Mayhue contends that strong, natural leaders are people who are (1) highly motivated, (2) externally pleasing, (3) knowledgeable, and (4) available. Strong spiritual leaders are those who are (1) sufficient (able, gifted, capable), (2) submitted to God, (3) spiritual, and (4) steadfast.

13. These three models are listed in ch. 2.



Christ hymn from Philippians as the example of spiritual leadership. At this point we adjourned for dinner and a break.

Over dinner I asked the CDT to create a Venn diagram about leadership. One side represented secular leadership and the other represented spiritual leadership. They were to list various characteristics that came to their mind about each category; in the middle they were to place all of the characteristics that overlapped between these two forms of leadership. This formed the transition from the first to the second session.

The second session focused on a theology of kenosis from Philippians 2:5-11. We began with a discussion of the background of Philippians, especially the history of the city, the church, and the epistle itself. We specifically discussed the Philippians' understanding of honor and influence as was demonstrated through the *cursus honorum*. This focused on the ethics of humility and emptying in the kingdom of God, which God sees as true honor. We also studied how, in the Christ hymn, Jesus becomes the exemplar of the *cursus pudorum*, a life of humility and service. Paul calls the Christians to live a cruciform life, a lifestyle patterned on Jesus's sacrifice. We then discussed leadership in terms of the Christ hymn, discerning which pattern our views best emulated: the honors race or the worsening race. We spent a few moments reflecting on our day, and then closed with a spiritual formation practice.

I explained the concepts of breath prayer and the Jesus prayer,<sup>14</sup> giving them a handout of these practices. We then practiced the Jesus prayer together as a group for a few minutes before breaking for the evening.

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14. The Jesus prayer is a short prayer that states, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

On Saturday we assembled for breakfast at 8:30. After breakfast we practiced *lectio divina* over Philippians 2:1-11. I gave them a handout of the traditional steps and taught the group the practice. We spent approximately ten minutes reading through the text individually, then reassembled to discuss four questions: (1) What struck you from this text? (2) Why do you think that stood out to you? (3) What might God be trying to teach you from this text? (4) How did you hear that text differently after our discussions last night?

The third session focused on having the same  $\phi\rho\nu\epsilon\iota\nu$ . We looked at how Philippians 2:5 serves as the crux of the passage: “Have this same attitude among yourselves as was in Christ Jesus.” As a group, the CDT discussed how Jesus’s life serves as our example and how we are called to imitate him in our “way of being.” We looked at the definition of *phronesis* and how Paul uses this concept ten times in Philippians. *Phronesis* is not just an attitude or mindset but, instead, focuses on a way of being, a “pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.” This requires both intellectual contemplation and physical implementation, for Paul is calling them to conform their actions into the shape of Christ in order to live and lead in a cruciform way. We discussed how Philippians is a letter of moral exhortation, for Paul was trying to help them understand how their faith should influence every aspect of their lives. As we examined Paul’s use of *phronesis*, we noticed that Paul utilizes the word to point towards moral discernment and moral living, which is an integral component of heavenly citizenship. We also discussed Philippians 1:27-30 as the *propositio* of the letter, examining how citizenship in the kingdom of God trumps Roman citizenship. This citizenship requires the development of a *phronesis* modeled on the example of Christ.

The fourth session of the retreat began with a discussion of leadership, especially in terms of superficial spirituality. We returned to the discussion of secular and spiritual leadership and discussed how church leaders are chosen, both in general and at WUCC. We then discussed how Paul was seeking to develop their *phronesis* through their minds and the things they “consider.” As a group, the CDT worked through Paul’s use of the word ἡγέομαι, found six times in the letter.<sup>15</sup> We looked at how Paul wants the Philippians to pattern themselves on Christ’s example, allowing themselves to be molded into the character of Christ.<sup>16</sup> As a group, we discerned that this is God’s work. As we considered Philippians 2:12-13, we noticed that it was God who was at work in us as we “work out our salvation.”<sup>17</sup> We discussed the role of spiritual practices, through which God works in our hearts/minds/souls, making us more like him. We looked at Greenman’s definition of spiritual formation, breaking it down into various parts. The CDT members were asked to think about how they draw close to God in their own lives, and we discussed their personal spiritual formation as a group. Finally, we discussed how spiritual formation was an integral part of spiritual leadership. One can be a *spiritual* leader only if one is continuing to develop spiritually. At the end of this session we took time to spend with God. The CDT was asked to spend a few moments in spiritual silence with God, simply being in his presence. They were then supposed to spend time

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15. Phil 2:3, 6, 25; 3:7, 8 (twice).

16. This language is influenced by Johnson, “Transformation,” 236, and Willis, “Seeing the Faith,” 188-89.

17. The Greek word that Paul uses, κατεργάζομαι, can be translated “to perform, accomplish, achieve,” “to work out in such a way that something is achieved,” or even “to fashion (oneself), render one fit for something.”

reflecting on the session, asking God to show them where they needed to grow and develop spiritually.

The fifth session proceeded differently from the sessions before. I had asked the formal leaders of the congregation (elders and deacons) to come to this session with the CDT. The goal was to work together to brainstorm about how these leaders wanted grow and mature in their spiritual leadership. I wanted these leaders to serve as a resource group for the project, helping determine the course of the intervention and curriculum. Both elders, seven deacons, and the associate minister attended the retreat.

Over the next twenty-five minutes the members of the CDT took turns presenting some of the information they had learned over the course of the retreat. This was not originally part of the plan, but something I had brainstormed during the break between the third and fourth sessions. Allowing the CDT to share their insights with WUCC's leaders allowed me to ascertain how well they had internalized and processed the information they had been presented. The team did a wonderful job sharing what they had learned, from the differences between secular and spiritual leadership to the background of Philippians to the theology of the Christ hymn. All members of the CDT spoke, sharing what they had learned with the group. Sara, Don, and Vicky each spoke about spiritual leadership. Allen gave detailed information about Philippians, specifically focusing on the *cursus pudorum* and the need for humility. Don and Oliver both spoke about the Christ hymn and *phronesis*. The CDT members helped fill in information for one another, and they also fielded questions from the leadership.<sup>18</sup> Throughout this

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18. Chapter 4 goes into more detail about the leaders' responses to this retreat.

exchange I had to speak only once or twice, clarifying some information and giving a summary.

At this point, I transitioned to the leadership. Although I had my own insights about this intervention, I wanted the curriculum to meet the concerns that the leadership felt needed to be addressed. Specifically, I wanted to discern how they wanted to grow closer to God and how they desired to be formed spiritually. Everyone participated in this discussion, and their answers were varied: some desired a deeper intimacy with God while others wanted to be serving in the community. Their spiritual formation responses can be placed in three main categories: internal,<sup>19</sup> relational,<sup>20</sup> and communal.<sup>21</sup> These categories are not exclusive, and many of their responses overlap from one category to the other. Their statements, however, showed that the leaders had specific needs for spiritual development in their own lives. One of the elders prayed for the CDT and the project. He also prayed for the leadership of the congregation. We had a meal together, then the retreat ended for the weekend.

I also sent the CDT home with the theology section of this paper and notes from the weekend, and I asked them to peruse these before our next meeting together. We scheduled to meet on October 19 to begin working on the curriculum.

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19. Internal disciplines included humility, selflessness, patience, and balance.

20. Here, I define relational practice as ways in which the respondents wanted to grow in their relationship with God. These practices included praying, listening to God, and practicing the presence of God.

21. Communal practices are those done with one or more other individuals. These needs included confession, hospitality, fellowship, vulnerability/intimacy, service, evangelism, grace, celebration, and active listening to others.

## Sessions

Although each session had a different theme and emphasis, the schedule of each session was consistent. We began with a prayer, followed by a reflection on the spiritual practice or practices assigned for the week. All members were expected to contribute to the discussion, sharing what they learned from that spiritual discipline and how it helped them throughout the week, as well as what they saw as the potential implementation of this discipline in the curriculum. At times I led this discussion; other times various members of the CDT facilitated it.

This interaction was one of the most formative parts of the curriculum development. This reflection often lasted fifteen or twenty minutes as we processed what we had learned about ourselves and God. This often led to moments of vulnerability and transparency as the members of the CDT shared their lives with one another. Many of these insights are shared in chapter 4.

After our discussion of the spiritual discipline, I transitioned the CDT to a discussion of the theme for the week. Almost every week was shaped around a portion of the Christ hymn, although other portions of Philippians were also incorporated. This was a theme that I had decided beforehand. I made these decisions in order to best meet the needs of WUCC's leadership (as ascertained in the retreat) while also remaining true to the flow of Philippians and the Christ hymn. There were times, however, that the CDT would suggest changing the theme or adding an additional lesson or reading. Those times will be highlighted below in the individual session discussions. We worked through the theme, reading the passages and creating questions for the curriculum. All of these efforts

were aided by creating a purpose statement, the learning goal that we hoped each lesson would achieve.

At the end of our session I introduced the new spiritual exercises we would practice over the next week. These practices were chosen with the upcoming theme in mind (i.e., confession when discussing humility). We would practice this exercise together, if needed, and then close in prayer.

Each week there was homework designed to help the participants be prepared for the upcoming conversation. This homework included one or two spiritual formation practices that directly related to the topic in question. The participants practiced those disciplines each week and journaled about their experiences. The homework often included a small packet of relevant materials that pertained to the topic in question. These included book chapters, articles, and other resources designed to help the participants reflect on the upcoming topic. I would often check in with the CDT during the week, seeing if they had any questions or helping them process what they were learning, if needed. At times the members of the CDT were asked to help in other aspects of the curriculum: writing *lectio divina* exercises, bringing verses or stories that correspond to this spiritual discipline or theme of the week, etc.

During these sessions I took detailed field notes, tracking non-verbal cues, individual participation, the discussion of the spiritual practice, and any pertinent comments. After each session I added my analysis and any additional comments. I also coded these responses to look for integrative themes and emphases that corresponded to the goals of the intervention (spiritual formation and spiritual leadership development).

### *Session 1*

The first session took place on Monday, October 19, from 6:30 until 8:15pm. Four of the CDT were present; only Oliver was missing.<sup>22</sup> We began with a prayer, and then did a *lectio divina* over Philippians 1:3-11. The group read for approximately seven minutes and reflected on two main questions: What stood out to you from this reading, and why do you think that is? What does this passage say about leadership? The CDT had a number of great insights, especially about leadership: Don stated that leaders must keep people in their hearts and minds; Allen argued that leadership is all about God's glory, not about our own; Vicky stated that true leaders are servants of Christ and have the fruits of righteousness in their lives.

I had asked Vicky and Allen if they would present a short seminar on curriculum development to the group. Since both of them were educators, I wanted them to use their expertise to teach us about the process. Vicky and Allen discussed the need for a purpose statement for each lesson; this would allow us to keep a specific focus and view the text and the questions through this interpretive lens. Vicky discussed the need to integrate different learning styles into the curriculum, allowing people to utilize their strengths and connect in different ways to the lesson. Many of their insights were incorporated into the curriculum and the leader guide.

When they were finished, I discussed my overall goal for the curriculum: I hoped this project would help leaders develop a Christian *phronesis*, corresponding more and

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22. At this point the CDT transitioned from five members to four. Oliver's life became hectic, from family emergencies and illnesses to work stress. As a result, Oliver was unable to participate in the rest of the project.



more to the likeness of Christ, so that they could help shape others into the likeness of Christ. All of our questions, lessons, and spiritual practices were oriented to this goal.

From there, the group summarized secular and spiritual leadership, helping develop a series of questions and statements for the curriculum. First, we developed a purpose statement and then sought to create questions that achieved that purpose. During this session Vicky took notes about the questions and group insights. At the end of our time together, I asked each CDT member to choose a text and create a *lectio divina* over that text.<sup>23</sup> We discussed the various steps of *lectio divina* once again, and I handed out a packet that helped summarize this practice.<sup>24</sup>

I introduced two new spiritual practices for the CDT to implement over the next week: Practicing the presence of God and examen.<sup>25</sup> We specifically talked about the presence of God and worked through Calhoun's article on this topic. I also talked about examen, but this is a practice that the church had participated in before, so I did not emphasize it too heavily.<sup>26</sup> Afterwards, we adjourned in prayer, led by Don.

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23. The passages assigned were: Mark 10:42-45 (Sara); John 13:1-5, 12-17 (Vicky); Phil 2:19-30 (Don); Phil 3:7-15 (Allen); Phil 4:2-3 (Oliver, later completed by me).

24. These articles included Dallas Willard, "Looking like Jesus: Divine Resources for a Changed Life Are Always Available," in *The Great Omission* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 23-31; Greenman, "Spiritual Formation," 23-35; "Ignatian Examen," abridged version of an unpublished paper by Daniel McGraw; Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, "Examen," in *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), 52-55 (hereinafter *SDH*); *ibid.*, "Practicing the Presence," in *SDH*, 59-62.

25. Ignatian examen consists of two practices: general examen and particular examen. The CDT participated in the general examen during this week.

26. I checked on them a few days later to see if they had any questions, however.

## *Session 2*

The second session took place on Monday, November 2, from 6:30 until 8:15pm. Although the goal was to meet weekly, three members of the group had scheduling conflicts for October 26, so the meeting was postponed.

We began with a discussion over the spiritual practices for the last week. At first the group was very quiet; they did not want to share what they had learned about themselves or about God. By simply sitting in silence, however, the group began to respond to the practices. Both practices were difficult for members of the group; Sara thought practicing the presence of God was more of a checklist, which did not satisfy her soul. Don felt uncomfortable with the practice of examen, especially its connection to Catholicism. Allen felt detached from some of the experiences. One of the common themes throughout this discussion was time; all four CDT members mentioned how they simply did not have time to do the practice or to do the practice as they might have wanted.

This led to an impromptu discussion on spiritual disciplines. One of the aspects I wanted the group to remember was that not every practice works for every person; spiritual disciplines are often connected to a specific history, theology, and culture, and they do not always translate universally to another culture. Just because they worked for one person in our group does not mean that they would work for everyone else. Instead, the hope was to introduce the CDT to a myriad of practices so that they could find some that did connect with their spirit. Another aspect of spiritual practices is the idea of discipline: carving out time and making a routine. Something will always come up and distract or divert us; by creating a routine, however, we are able to devote ourselves to the

practice for a short period of time. Finally, I wanted each member to realize that spiritual formation is a journey, not a destination. Monumental growth does not occur within a few days; instead, incremental growth takes place as we spend time with God. We looked back on the discussion and highlighted moments in which individuals mentioned what they had learned about God through these experiences. Although Sara thought that “practicing the presence” did not work for her, she did like the reminder that God was with her all of the time. Allen felt detached from the process, but also spoke about enjoying the presence of God, which helped the words of the old hymn (“And he walks with me, and he talks with me”) come to life. We discovered that they had had grandiose expectations for these spiritual disciplines, and they were unable to recognize the small gains that often accompany spiritual formation. This helped the group understand the process more clearly and, I believe, helped them be at peace about what they had done that week.

We then moved onto the curriculum development portion. Originally, I had planned to dive directly into the Christ hymn, developing the curriculum solely from there. As I had done more research and reflection that week, however, I felt that there was more that needed to be discussed about Philippians as a whole. I approached the CDT about this quandary, and together we decided to write this session to examine the background of Philippians and Paul’s meaning in Philippians 1:27-30. The CDT thought that this connection would help transition from the concepts of spiritual leadership to the development of a Christlike *phronesis*. As a result of this group decision, we created a curriculum lesson that focused on citizenship and its implications for spiritual life and spiritual leadership.

Because of the group's discussion about "practicing the presence of God," I chose to incorporate that spiritual discipline into a later session in the curriculum. I felt that, based on how the CDT had interacted with this discipline, it would fit better into a later discussion. Instead, we focused on Ignatian examen for this lesson, which allowed the participants to consider their citizenship.

In the last fifteen minutes of our time together, I introduced two spiritual practices for the next week: contemplation and the palms up/palms down prayer. We discussed contemplation, and I gave the group additional handout for this practice.<sup>27</sup> We also discussed the palms up/palms down prayer and practiced it together. The group asked some questions about these practices. I then asked for a volunteer to lead the spiritual discipline discussion, and Sara volunteered.

In order to prepare the group for the next week's discussion, I passed out a copy of an article<sup>28</sup> and asked the group to look through the theology section and their notes from the retreat, specifically thinking about *phronesis*. We then we dismissed for the evening.

### ***Session 3***

The group assembled for our third session on Monday, November 9, from 6:30 until 8:00pm. The conversation began with a discussion of the spiritual disciplines, which was led by Sara. We discussed their reactions to both exercises. Generally, the responses were positive,<sup>29</sup> but Allen had a difficult time with these spiritual disciplines; he did

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27. This handout was Calhoun, "Contemplation," in *SDH*, 48-51.

28. Willis, "Seeing the Faith," 181-92.

29. For example, Sara was originally skeptical but found that the palms up/palms down prayer allowed her to release her anger and other emotions from throughout the day. Don felt like he was able to have genuine quiet time alone with the Lord, something he had not experienced in quite a while. Vicky felt

mention appreciating the quietness of the practices. Others mentioned how they were able to expand these disciplines into other aspects of their lives (i.e., driving, cooking, and work). Overall, the decision was made to incorporate these two spiritual disciplines into the curriculum.

From here, the group began working on the curriculum itself. We quickly discussed the Willis article and his views that Paul is calling the Philippians to loyalty to Christ and a cruciform lifestyle.<sup>30</sup> We also shared what we remembered from our study of *phronesis* over the past week. As a group, we focused on Philippians 2:5 as Paul's transition into the Christ hymn; we also examined Paul's other uses of *phronesis* in Philippians.

The CDT struggled with 2:1-4, seeing it as "lofty" and at odds with how we often operate in our lives. They also struggled with the ideas of disagreement, wondering how this left room for coming to different conclusions. The CDT also discussed the meaning of success within the church, wondering how the church should define success without falling into vainglory. All of these insights were wonderful additions to the discussion and allowed the CDT to pursue other avenues of thought that I had not considered.

Throughout this discussion Vicky took notes of the questions and comments while I also wrote them on the board. At the end of our session, I took a picture of the board and collected her notes. We then began discussing the spiritual practice for the upcoming week: journaling. I created a journaling guide for them to use throughout the week, with each day having a new topic or theme. I also gave them an article about

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that she was able to release the fears and tensions she experienced and simply be with God. I discussed how it helped me center in with the Lord, and I had practiced contemplation through walks in my neighborhood.

30. Willis, "Seeing the Faith," 189-91, esp. 189.

journaling,<sup>31</sup> and we discussed some ways in which they could journal outside of the assigned tasks. We closed with a prayer together.

#### *Session 4*

Session 4 took place on Thursday, November 19, from 6:30 until 8:20pm. This session was conducted later in the week because both Sara and Vicky had work obligations on Monday. Don, however, had a work obligation come up at the last moment and was unable to attend.

We began with a discussion of the spiritual discipline. The responses to journaling were varied. Sara did not do the discipline because she did not have the time to do it. Vicky found it engaging because it was so different from the other practices, but also thought that it might get old and become redundant over time. Allen started the discipline, but then one of the prompts<sup>32</sup> sent him on a tangent; he began, unbeknownst to himself, doing a form of the particular examen of conscience. His practice combined introspection with behavior modification. We discussed his experiences and what he learned from “scoring” his day.<sup>33</sup> Allen found that he “competed” against himself to do the sin less than he had previously and took pride in the fact that he could control his own expectations. Because no one else would ever see this list, he felt that he could be honest with himself about these struggles.

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31. Calhoun, “Journaling,” *SDH*, 56-58.

32. The prompt was on Wednesday’s journaling assignment, and it stated: Write about your spiritual life to this point. Where do you begin? How did you get to where you are today? What has God taught you along the way?

33 Allen described this modified spiritual practices with sports terminology: scoring, competing, winning, etc. These terms are direct quotes from his own description of his practice.

It was interesting to reflect on this experience, both at that moment and then later in the evening. Although Allen did not strictly stick to the spiritual practice that was assigned, he used the practice as a prompt to find a practice that did work for him. The hope is that this curriculum would allow the participants to discover a greater intimacy with God, and I am grateful that Allen has found ways to do that in conjunction with the curriculum and its practices.

Based on all of these discussions, we decided to use journaling this week as a way to stretch the spiritual imagination of the individuals engaging in the curriculum. Many of the journaling prompts, however, were changed to help guide the participants from the third session (*phronesis*) to the focus of the fourth (contemplation).

At this point the team began to create the curriculum together. We worked on a purpose statement and then began brainstorming about contemplation. We read through the Christ hymn together, and we focused on Jesus's consideration. Paul states that "Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" (2:6). The word that Paul uses means "to consider, contemplate, count, regard," and it implies the idea of careful, methodical thinking that leads to moral discernment. This led to a deep discussion with the CDT. Sara struggled with this interpretation of the text, stating that she had always believed that Jesus simply "followed the plan" because it was God's mission and his will. To consider the possibility that Jesus actually stopped to consider the ramifications of his decision was something that she had never explored, and it left her feeling uncomfortable. The CDT discussed this topic, looking through various passages of Scripture together and talking about pericopes from the life of Jesus. In the end, Sara stated that it was something she would need to study and consider.

The CDT also discussed the idea of the *morphe* of God as a pivotal idea for understanding the text. They spent a lot of time thinking about the various ways that this passage could be interpreted: temporally, causally, and concessively. As a result, this discussion became a key focus in multiple places throughout the curriculum.

During the time together, Allen suggested that the group read through the book of Philippians multiple times over the course of the curriculum. As he argued, it is a short book but having a deeper understanding of its content and flow would be integral to understanding the curriculum and its trajectory. The CDT agreed with this thought, and it became a suggestion in the leader guide. Throughout this time Sara took notes while I wrote the questions on the board, and I also took a photo of the board as we discussed the topic.

At the end we practiced the palms up/palms down prayer together again, then discussed the spiritual practice for the week: confession. The CDT looked concerned at this point, so we discussed the role of confession in the life of a Christian. I asked them to practice examen a couple of times throughout the week and then begin to pray about something they wanted/needed to confess. I also asked them to think about someone in whom they could trust and confide. If they were willing, I asked that they confess some of the things that were on their hearts. I gave them articles about spiritual accountability to read and consider.<sup>34</sup> We closed in a prayer together and then adjourned for the night.

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34. These articles included Calhoun, "Confession and Self-Examination," *SDH*, 91-94; *ibid.*, "Accountability Partner," *SDH*, 122-25; Foster, "The Discipline of Confession," in *The Celebration of Discipline*.



### *Session 5*

Due to Thanksgiving holidays, the group next assembled on Monday, November 30, from 6:30 until 8:30pm. Once again Don was unable to attend due to a work commitment, so the CDT met with just four members.

As we began, I led the group in a discussion of confession and accountability. We considered a number of questions together: How did it go? How did it feel to confess to someone else? How can confession be a sign of humility? They told who they confessed to and how it went; they were also very introspective about the process, discussing how they felt as they shared their life with someone else. One of the CDT members had a difficult time with the exercise because the person who heard their confession felt awkward about the conversation. The members of the CDT were helpful in thinking through the ramifications of asking people to confess.

The CDT also had some great insights into confession and leadership. Allen pointed out that ministers need a place to confess their sins; Sara and Vicky stated that public confession can cause issues and, possibly, even weaken others' faith. Everyone saw the need for leaders to be able to confess, but they were split on whether public or private confession would be the most appropriate. Everyone shared their personal experiences with confession, whether in their own lives or in churches that they had attended in the past. Allen pointed out that African-American Churches of Christ handle confession differently, with confession often being done publicly in front of the assembly. Through these discussions the CDT was able to practice vulnerability with one another and understand the others in a different light.

From there the group participated in a *lectio divina* over Philippians 2:1-11, specifically focusing on words or phrases that indicated humility. This led to a discussion about humility in Jesus's life and story, as well as in the Christian life. The group worked together to create a series of questions to focus on humility, which is an essential component of developing the *phronesis* of Christ. This session also focused on the kenosis of Jesus, examining how Jesus emptied himself and took on the form of a servant. The group then explored how kenosis works with developing humility and shaped questions about spiritual formation and spiritual leadership to fit these ideas.

At the end of this session, the CDT worked together to develop a way of using spiritual practices to promote humility. The group discussed using the two types of examen to promote introspection, which would help promote confession. The spiritual practices of session 5 incorporate their ideas.

At the end of the session, I discussed the upcoming theme, service, and encouraged them to practice the discipline of service throughout the next week. I emailed some suggestions the next day, including praying for people to serve, looking for opportunities to serve, and serving someone difficult in their lives. We closed in a prayer and adjourned for the evening.

### ***Session 6***

The sixth session took place on Monday, December 14, 2015. We actually met together on December 7, but Vicky was unable to attend on that day due to a work commitment. I was also ill that day but decided to meet anyway. We began the session when Sara received word that her house had been burglarized. As a result, we adjourned the meeting for the following week.

When we assembled again, everyone was available. We began with a discussion of who they had served and how they felt. We then went through a *lectio divina* of Philippians 2:1-16a, reading the text through the lens of service. Don pointed out that the true definition of a servant is “valuing others before yourself.” Vicky pointed out that verses 1-4 are specific ways in which the church can serve one another. Sara pointed out that God is working through us as we serve others, empowering and inspiring us. Allen pointed out that friendship and fellowship are enhanced when we serve one another.

These insights formed an excellent transition to the topic for the week. We looked at other places in Philippians in which Paul refers to service through actions and individuals.<sup>35</sup> The group tied in discussions from other sessions, including humility and obedience, yet they also struggled with how leadership and service coexist. One of the questions that had come up in previous sessions concerned this issue: Is the person who takes out the trash a leader? The group was split on this discussion, with the disagreement hinging on whether a leader has to be a servant. We also read through some quotations about servant leadership, discussing the role of service in the life of the leader. In the end, Vicky stated, “You cannot be a leader by *only* taking out the trash.... You need to be exemplary in other ways, especially spiritually, which also compels you to take out the trash.” This discussion also became part of the curriculum, in which the participants are asked to consider that question themselves.

Because this would be our last session before the Christmas holidays, I asked the group to engage in the practice of service again. They were to pray about whom they

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35. These include Paul’s use of “servants of Christ Jesus” (1:1); addressing the letter to the “overseers and servants (deacons)” of the church (1:2); the examples of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus; and the way in which the Philippians served Paul through their gift to him (4:10, 14-19).

could serve and look for ways, small and large, in which they could serve others in the name of Christ. We spent time praying for one another, and then we adjourned for the night.

### ***Session 7***

The CDT reconvened for our seventh session on January 18, 2016. Allen had a sick child and was unable to attend, but he received the notes via email and sent in his own thoughts. We began with a discussion about service and what they had learned through this practice.

One of the things they were asked to do was to serve a “difficult” person. Each one of us shared who that person was and what that service was like. The CDT spoke about tension, intentionality, and the desire to serve someone “more deserving.” This led to a discussion about service being self-serving, focusing on how service makes us feel. We looked at the story of Jesus and the ten lepers, talking about how Jesus served even if the people were not deserving. We discussed why service for only those who are “deserving” might not truly be service, or at least service like Jesus’s. To serve those who are not deserving in the name of Christ helps us develop in our Christian *phronesis*. This discussion was helpful for setting the framework about service and obedience.

The curriculum development began with a discussion about the difference between obedience and submission. Although the concepts are different, the CDT agreed that they were close synonyms with one another. The CDT tied this concept back in with their practice of service; learning to obey Christ and serve others, even when we do not want to, is a way to develop our obedience to Christ.

As we worked on the curriculum together, one of the questions that arose was how leadership and obedience/submission could coexist. To whom should leaders be submissive? The group discussed being obedient to God through prayer, scheduling, and listening. Leaders are also called to be submissive to the needs of others in the congregation. As we examined the life of Jesus, we noticed the places in which Jesus was submissive to authorities in the Temple, in the government, and even in his crucifixion. Jesus was not submissive to others in his society, however (i.e., the Pharisees and their rigid interpretation of the Law). Jesus was always obedient to the will of God, which guided him in his submission to others. Vicky called this “a new way of obedience” that leaders should pursue, balancing the needs of others with the will of the Lord. Much of this discussion is reflected in the curriculum.

Part of this discussion also turned towards the history of racism in the Churches of Christ. At times the Churches of Christ were submissive to the demands and expectations of society rather than the will of the Lord. We discussed how spiritual leadership should have charted a new path in obedience to God’s will. We also discussed how this might apply to conflicts that could arise in WUCC in regard to making decisions or moving in new theological directions.

Although I often set the agenda for the CDT’s meetings, I had been unable to come with an appropriate spiritual practice for obedience. The CDT looked through various resources together,<sup>36</sup> brainstorming about possible disciplines in which the participants could engage. These included service (again), fasting, and listening, among

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36. These included Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline*; John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*; Calhoun, *SDH*; and Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*.

others. One of the CDT members suggested asking the participants which disciplines they did not like and having them repeat those disciplines for the week. This discussion then turned into how the group leader could help facilitate that discussion and guide the participants in those discoveries and decisions. The members of the CDT picked a spiritual discipline they wanted to work on for the week, and we adjourned in prayer.

### ***Session 8***

Our eighth session took place on January 25, 2016, from 6:30 until 8:30 pm. We covered two main themes during this session: cruciformity and the goal of leadership.

As we began, the CDT did a *lectio divina* over Philippians 1:9-11 and 2:1-11, examining this text with a specific focus on the cross. As we began our discussion, Vicky stated that she was amazed at how each time she read the text she discovered something new within it.

One of the primary discussions centered on how we view the cross today in contrast to the Roman understanding of crucifixion. Members of the CDT stated that today it is a decoration and jewelry, which glosses over the horror and the shame of the crucifixion. For us the cross is a symbol of love, but for the Romans it signified pain, shame, ridicule, and low position. This allowed us to discuss why Jesus would purposefully choose the cross and ask his followers to do the same. If we are to “have the same *phronesis* as Christ Jesus,” who chose the cross, then this carries great significance for the Christian life and spiritual leadership. The CDT looked back through their retreat notes and articles they had read, noting how Jesus specifically chose the cross because of his divinity. We also discussed how the cross is Paul’s master story and the centerpiece of

his theology.<sup>37</sup> As a group, we discussed what cruciformity meant in life and leadership and developed a trajectory of questions for the curriculum.

The CDT then transitioned to a discussion about the goal of leadership. I had the group read the same passage as before, but this time reading the text in light of leadership. As the group talked about goals, we transitioned to a discussion about “the glory of God.” We looked at how glorifying God was the purpose of Jesus’s actions in the Christ hymn and how God’s glory is also the purpose of a righteous life (1:11). We looked at the times that Paul uses the word “glory” in the text<sup>38</sup> and also contrasted it with the idea of “vainglory” (κενοδοξίαν, Phil. 2:3). The CDT discussed spiritual leaders in terms of glory: in spiritual leadership, our actions bring God glory and do not garner attention or fame for ourselves. The group also discussed how they had seen this in churches of which they had been a part, while also discussing humility, service, and obedience. Together we crafted a series of questions that served as the foundation for this lesson. I continued working on those questions over the course of the next week. We prayed together, and we adjourned for the evening.

Over the course of the next week, I began finalizing aspects of the curriculum. As I thought back through our discussions, I realized that the three models of leadership that I had presented at the retreat did not adequately reflect the model of spiritual leadership that the CDT had helped define. As a result I began working on a new model of spiritual leadership, one that took into account spiritual formation that would help the leaders and

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37. Language borrowed from Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity*.

38. Phil. 1:11; 2:11; 3:19; 4:19, 20. Also 3:21 in adjective form.

congregation move towards a defined goal. I then sent this model out to the CDT via email for their feedback, making slight changes to the model as they suggested.

Through the CDT's responses in the last session together, I also felt that the curriculum needed an additional lesson to summarize the material. As a result, I crafted session 10 on my own to help complete the material and launch the participants into spiritual leadership in the congregation. I also sent this lesson to the CDT for their thoughts and suggestions.

### ***Evaluation Session***

Our evaluation session took place on Monday, February 8. This session began with dinner and an informal conversation about how this process had influenced the CDT's spiritual lives. As individuals we then answered the evaluation question for approximately fifteen minutes,<sup>39</sup> then came back together for a group discussion about our insights. I describe the results of this evaluation session in greater detail in chapter 4, analyzing their comments and the results of their participation in this intervention. I thanked the group for all of their diligence and hard work. I also passed out a final copy of the curriculum, asking them to look through it again for any suggestions or changes that needed to be made. We prayed for one another and then adjourned.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

In order to judge the efficacy and validity of this intervention, it is important to evaluate the project from a variety of perspectives. I collected data from three different points of view: insider evaluation, outsider evaluation, and researcher evaluation.

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39. This evaluation question is located in appendix E.



Utilizing data triangulation,<sup>40</sup> I compared these resources in order to gain a better perspective of the efficacy of this curriculum for the development of spiritual leadership.

The members of the curriculum development team served as the insider angle of evaluation throughout the course of this project, providing insider evaluation. During the final session I handed out an evaluation question for the CDT to consider. This evaluation centered around changes in understanding of spiritual formation and leadership and their perceptions on how spiritual practices and leadership might change through the implementation of this curriculum. This evaluation allowed the CDT to judge the curriculum from their own perspective, having just helped shape and guide the curriculum while also participating in its various spiritual practices. We then discussed their views corporately within the group, which allowed the exchange of ideas and permitted new possibilities to emerge through corporate imagination. I compiled their statements and looked for common themes, words, and ideas, specifically based on the formal coding system.

The second angle, outsider evaluation, came from the views of an outside expert. I asked Dr. Houston Heflin, associate professor of ministry at Abilene Christian University, to evaluate the curriculum and leader guide to judge their efficacy for spiritual leadership development. Dr. Heflin earned a doctorate of education that specifically focuses on spiritual formation and Christian education. He examined the

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40. Data triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the situation that is being researched. Through triangulation, the researcher adds breadth and depth to the research, while also adding trustworthiness to the researcher's final product. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 70-76. In the course of this research, the three angles of triangulation are the final evaluation of the curriculum development team (insider); the researcher's field notes containing observations and analysis (researcher); and the evaluation of a curriculum expert (outsider).

curriculum and wrote a summary of his analysis, providing a report about its strengths and weaknesses.

The third angle of evaluation, researcher evaluation, came from the field notes I created at each CDT session. Each week I took notes during these sessions. The notes were filled on a piece of paper with two columns. The first column represents my observations, with prompts for attention (i.e. non-verbal cues, participation, spiritual discipline, and participants' comments.) During these sessions I listened to the CDT members, recording their thoughts and comments, as well as my observations. Later that evening, after the sessions had concluded, I added my own analysis and interpretations of these events in the second column.<sup>41</sup> I also looked for any slippage from my preconceptions to my analysis, noting where the events of the session did not correspond to my anticipation.<sup>42</sup>

After recording my own analysis, I also evaluated the session using coding.<sup>43</sup> These codes were derived from key words and phrases from chapter 2, including words related to kenosis, spiritual leadership, *phronesis*, and spiritual formation. Specifically, I examined each response to see if the CDT's perceptions, discussions, and conclusions of the curriculum development process matched up with the practical-theological vision of the project.<sup>44</sup> This permitted me to determine how well the spiritual practices functioned

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41. Samples of the field note worksheet and coding protocol are included in appendices C and D.

42. Slippage is any disconfirming evidence or rival interpretations of data that need to be reported. See Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 199-201.

43. Coding is "the process by which observations recorded in the course of social research—typically in a social survey questionnaire—are transformed from raw data into categories and classifications, which then become the subject of quantitative data analysis." Definition from SAGE Publications website, <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n22.xml>, last accessed July 7, 2015.

44. These codes are outlined in appendix D.

in developing the spirituality of the CDT. I evaluated how their understanding of leadership had changed over the course of the intervention. I also analyzed the results of the participant evaluations, using this same coding and incorporated those insights into my final analysis. This coding helped me evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in light of the participants' responses to the process of curriculum development.

Through this process of participatory action research, utilizing diverse members from the congregation, I believe that we produced a meaningful and effective curriculum that will help the leaders of the congregation be spiritually formed into the image of Christ as they lead the congregation forward. While a curriculum cannot coerce or force spiritual formation, the leaders who participate in this curriculum should begin to develop a deeper Christlike *phronesis* in their own lives. I came to this determination by examining the ways in which the CDT changed their own perspectives of spiritual formation and spiritual leadership, and by the ways in which the CDT self-reported their own spiritual growth and *phronetic* development. These results will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Chapter 1 introduced the need for spiritual leadership development at the West University Church of Christ. Chapter 2 outlined a theology of spiritual leadership from Philippians that centers on the development of a Christlike *phronesis* through spiritual formation. Chapter 3 outlined the development of a curriculum that emphasized spiritual leadership formation through group Bible study, spiritual practice implementation, and both personal and communal reflection. Chapter 4 discusses the results of this intervention in terms of both the development of the curriculum and the spiritual development of participants in the intervention itself (the CDT). In addition, the curriculum was evaluated by an outside expert, and his analysis will help ascertain the strengths and challenges of the curriculum and the underlying leadership formation process. Specifically, this intervention was evaluated through the use of data triangulation, a qualitative research method in which three angles of observation are employed to evaluate the credibility of the study's results. These three angles of evaluation came from the researcher, the insiders (CDT), and an outside expert. By examining the results from these three angles, I will demonstrate that the curriculum that we developed as a team is efficacious in developing spiritual leadership through spiritual formation.

### **Researcher Observer Insights—Field Notes**

As the researcher, I had a unique role in this process. I chose the project, recruited the members of the CDT, presented the theology, and determined the agenda for each group session. Yet I also served as an observer to the process. As the team met together, I took detailed field notes about the group's interactions and statements. After each session I would add any pertinent details and observations, showing my perceptions of the conversations and how the group interacted with one another and the material. During these sessions I observed four main areas: non-verbal cues, participants' comments, reflections on the spiritual practice(s), and participation in the discussion. I then reflected on these areas and code the group's interaction in order to best understand how the group was incorporating spiritual formation, spiritual leadership, and *phronesis* into the curriculum development process and in their own lives.

In the following pages I will examine the CDT's interactions during the retreat and the group sessions. Throughout this intervention I discovered that the group was developing a Christlike *phronesis* as they helped develop this curriculum. The process of reflecting on Scripture, implementing spiritual practices, and participating in communal discussion helped these participants be formed in the midst of formulating the curriculum.

#### ***Retreat***

Approximately six weeks before the intervention was set to begin, I approached eight different individuals and invited them to participate in this process. I sent each potential team member an email explaining the doctorate of ministry, outlining the intervention, and relating the time commitments involved in the process. Each participant

was asked to prayerfully consider becoming part of this team, and to respond within two weeks. I then arranged a personal meeting with the participants individually in order to discuss the project in detail and answer any questions that they might have. Of those eight, six initially agreed to become participants in the curriculum development team. Two participants declined due to time restraints in their schedules. Another participant, Linda, agreed initially but then obtained a position teaching evening courses in a local university, making it impossible for her to participate. Five individuals accepted the invitation to participate, and they were invited to an introductory retreat on October 9 and 10, 2015.

The retreat was discussed in detail in chapter 3.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this retreat was to explain the theology of spiritual leadership, spiritual formation, and Philippians. Because I was teaching the majority of this time, I was unable to take field notes throughout the first four sessions of the retreat. The CDT interacted with the material, asking detailed questions and seeking clarification when they did not understand. Overall, I noticed that the group seemed engaged in the process and were reflecting on this new information.

I wanted to ascertain how well they understood the information, so I decided to have the group share from the retreat material with the WUCC leadership team. I had invited the leaders of the congregation to participate in the final session of the retreat. I wanted these leaders to talk about their own insights about leadership and spiritual formation, and I planned that their comments would help shape the progression through their interactions and insights. Of the fourteen individuals invited, nine were able to attend this retreat. During the fourth session I asked the participants to think back on what

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1. Additionally, an outline of the retreat can be found in appendix B of this thesis.

they had learned throughout the weekend retreat in order to present this information to the leaders, who would come for the fifth session. Although this plan was spontaneous, it allowed me to discern how well the CDT had absorbed and reflected on the retreat information; how well would they be able to teach these leaders what they had learned?

The members of the CDT each talked about what they had learned over the course of the retreat. They each took turns presenting information about spiritual leadership, spiritual formation, and the theology of Philippians. All five participants shared their insights, with each adding to the others' information to clarify or enhance. I only interjected once throughout the whole twenty-five minute presentation.

The responses of the WUCC leadership team were mixed. One deacon wanted to dig deeply into the theology, asking a number of questions and clarifying points. Two of the deacons almost took the discussion about spiritual leadership personally, hearing the discussion about spiritual formation as a possible indictment of their work. The elders, associate minister, and two deacons quickly grasped the discussion and asked clarifying questions. As I reflected upon this later that evening, I realized that the groups were split based upon their previous introduction to the project itself. I had discussed the development of the intervention multiple times in the elders'/ministers' meetings, so those individuals were familiar with the intervention and its reasons. Additionally, one of the deacons who grasped it quickly is in my weekly prayer group and the leader of my church small group; thus he was also familiar with the discussion. The rest of the deacons had only heard it briefly discussed in a deacon's meeting, a presentation that lasted ten minutes and took place at the end of the meeting. I realized that their reactions were

motivated by their familiarity (or lack thereof) with the intervention and the reasoning behind it.

I was able to judge the CDT's internalization of the material by the ways in which they responded to the leaders' questions. They were able to discuss a different vision for congregational leadership, one that emphasized spiritual maturity rather than power and decisiveness. They articulated the theological position well, showing how the book of Philippians presented a different view of leadership: leaders are those who are conformed to the image of Christ in their *phronesis*, which changes every aspect of their lives and leadership. Through my field notes and reflection on this experience, I was able to see how the group was internalizing this vision even this early in the intervention process.

At the end of that fifth session I asked the leaders to brainstorm the ways in which they wanted/needed to develop spiritually. Everyone participated in this discussion, and their answers were varied. Their responses, however, can be placed in three main categories: internal,<sup>2</sup> relational,<sup>3</sup> and communal.<sup>4</sup> These categories are not exclusive, and many of their responses overlap from one category to the other. Their responses, however, showed that although they did not completely understand the need of the curriculum initially, they all felt specific needs for spiritual development in their own lives. The retreat ended with a prayer, with one of our elders praying for the CDT and the process that we would undertake.

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2. Internal disciplines included humility, selflessness, patience, and balance.

3. Here, I define relational practice as ways in which the respondents wanted to grow in their relationship with God. These practices included praying, listening to God, and practicing the presence of God.

4. Communal practices are those done with one or more other individuals. These include confessing, offering hospitality, practicing fellowship, extending grace, speaking with vulnerability and intimacy, serving, evangelizing, celebrating, and listening to others.



## *Sessions*

The CDT engaged in ten sessions together over the course of the next three months.<sup>5</sup> Almost all of the sessions took place on Monday evenings, and each session lasted approximately an hour and a half. The sessions began with a time of prayer, followed by a time of reflection on the week's spiritual practices, then an introduction to the topic of the week and the passage for the session. The group worked together to develop the trajectory of each lesson and potential questions for the curriculum. As we reached the end of the session, I introduced the spiritual practice or practices that the group would engage in each week.

During each session I served as the participant observer, taking notes based on the CDT members' interactions and statements during the sessions.<sup>6</sup> I recorded my observations and the participants' statements in this form, and wrote potential questions in the margins. Later that evening I added additional comments and reflections on the evening, and then coded the session<sup>7</sup> to gain better understanding of the intervention's progress and the development of the CDT members. I used these coding terms (spiritual formation, kenosis, *phronesis*, and spiritual leadership) in order to analyze the results of the curriculum development process on the spiritual formation of the CDT.

One of the most insightful developments of the curriculum development process was that the CDT mirrored the process of spiritual leadership formation that the curriculum sought to develop. By engaging in the process of writing this curriculum, the

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5. The length of this project was unforeseen, and it was based on a number of different factors: having to begin later than planned, the holiday seasons, and various personal conflicts (e.g., sickness, robbery, work schedules). This will be discussed later in this chapter.

6. See appendix C for the researcher field note form.

7. See appendix D for the coding guidelines.

team internalized the various practices and insights that they had gained, which in turn began to deepen their Christlike *phronesis* and to help them develop into greater spiritual leaders. By examining this process in terms of these codes, I will show that the curriculum engaged its participants in the process of spiritual leadership formation for which it was designed. It is important to note that these codes are not mutually exclusive; there is significant overlap among the categories. Some responses were coded in two or more areas and could be listed under many different headings. For the sake of a cohesive narrative for the intervention, however, I have tried to engage these responses under the codes to which they best align. The coding categories are spiritual formation, kenosis, *phronesis*, and spiritual leadership.

### ***Spiritual Formation***

The primary goal of the curriculum was to develop spiritual leaders for the congregation through the intentional participation in individual and communal spiritual practices. Throughout the process of writing this curriculum, the members of the CDT engaged in various spiritual practices in order to gauge their efficacy for inclusion in the curriculum. Each session began with a discussion about the spiritual practice or practices that the members of the CDT had implemented throughout the week. Through these discussions, the researcher and the CDT could determine whether these practices were helpful and brought about the desired result of spiritual formation. As they were participating in and evaluating these practices, they were also incorporating these practices into their own spiritual lives. By listening to their responses, I was able to ascertain how these practices were influencing the spirituality of the CDT as they participated in these spiritual disciplines.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this project was discovering how different individuals connected to different spiritual disciplines. Some individuals appreciated some disciplines while others found them less helpful. For example, Sara did not find “practicing the presence of God” to be helpful; she felt like the alarm going off at specific time periods was a forced way to go about the practice. To her, it felt like a checklist. Yet others from the group really enjoyed the experience and benefited from the practice in their own lives. Just a week later, however, Sara really engaged with the “palms up/palms down” exercise, which Allen did not seem to enjoy.

One of the major implications that came up throughout these sessions was time. The CDT members are all engaged in their work, family lives, and other activities, and finding time to practice these spiritual disciplines was difficult. Don mentioned that he spent too much time running around, and he had realized later in the week he had not been spending any time in the presence of God. Others, especially early in this intervention, made similar comments. As these sessions progressed, however, the members seemed to internalize these practices. Although busyness was still a factor, they began setting aside time to engage in these spiritual practices. They began talking about these experiences much more effortlessly, even when they did not find the particular practice helpful for themselves; they had still taken the time to engage in the practice and spend time with God, which benefitted their spiritual formation. Thus their willingness to create space to engage in these spiritual practices demonstrates that these practices were changing their time and perspective.

At times the CDT began modifying some of the spiritual practices to fit their personal needs. During the week we engaged in a journaling exercise, Allen began

looking at different aspects of his life and some of the challenges he was facing. He realized his own sinfulness, and he began journaling about his need for change in those areas of his life. By naming his sin in that journaling exercise, he realized his need to work on that area more intensely. Without realizing what he was doing, he began to engage in a form of particular examen of conscience, tracking specific sinful behaviors and working to modify his engagement in those behaviors. Allen began to modify these practices for his own spiritual formation, engaging in other ways that would help him draw closer to God. Don discussed how the practice of slowing and being with God was helping ease his tension and stress; he began engaging in this practice on his own as a way of giving his burdens to God. After serving one difficult person in her life, Vicky began looking for other people that she could serve. She has continued engaging in this practice. The members of the CDT began modifying these practices for their own needs and continued engaging in practices they found helpful even after we had transitioned into another spiritual practice. They were beginning to internalize the purpose of this curriculum, facilitating their own spiritual formation in their personal lives.

While their statements during the sessions demonstrated their spiritual growth, there were things that happened outside of these sessions that demonstrated a growing level of spiritual maturity. After the fourth session Allen stayed behind and wanted to discuss engaging in spiritual practices throughout the day, looking for different ways he could engage in those practices. We discussed how to integrate things such as the Jesus prayer, practicing the presence of God, and work as a spiritual practice into his daily life. We also discussed Celtic spirituality and its emphasis on Christlike living, specifically how they engaged in every aspect of life and work as a community of believers in the

midst of unbelievers. He became excited about this discussion and asked for more resources.<sup>8</sup> A few weeks later he stayed after to discuss some of the topics he was reading and how he was beginning to implement these practices in his life.

As we dug deeper into Philippians and the Christ hymn, Sara was struck by a new paradigm for engaging with Scripture. The topics of obedience and consideration were especially challenging for her because they were areas that she had never considered when it came to Jesus's life and ministry. As a result, she decided to begin reading the Bible from the beginning in a different way. As she read through the Bible, she began writing down anything that she did not understand or that she had questions about. She was even willing to say "things that I struggle to believe." Her hermeneutical lens began shifting as she engaged with Scripture in this way, and she discussed how much more in awe of God she was becoming. She also began asking questions of her friends and ministers, trying to find new answers or ways of thinking. Sara remarked one evening how much that was helping her grow and learn. Through this process she discovered a new way to engage in spiritual formation, one that she is finding enlightening in her own spiritual journey.

Vicky discussed how this process had transformed her spiritual life. In our final session together, Vicky stated that she had prayed and done some sort of devotional each day, but through this intervention she had become more intentional in these practices. She wrote, "I now have learned new ways to dwell on the Word of God and pray, which has

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8. He borrowed two books on Celtic Christianity: George G. Hunter, III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West ... Again* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000); Northumbria Community, *Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community* (New York: HarperOne, 2002).

enriched my study and devotional time to become more insightful and meaningful. It has been a blessing.”

During session 7 I had been unable to come up with a spiritual practice that would correspond with the topic of obedience. As a group, we worked together to find an appropriate spiritual discipline. As I watched the CDT interact together, it became apparent how much they had grown during this intervention. They began looking at various spiritual disciplines, examining the options in light of the result they hoped it would produce. They looked not just at the intended results, however, but how it would also potentially teach the participants and draw them closer to God. They also talked about these potential practices in terms of their efficacy for leadership formation, not just for personal growth. The CDT was able to examine spiritual formation in light of its intended goal (spiritual maturity, relational depth, and spiritual leadership) rather than just as another spiritual practice.

Throughout this intervention I was able to see the CDT being spiritually formed through this process. They began making time to engage in these spiritual practices, finding them helpful for their own spiritual development. The CDT began to internalize these practices, modifying them to their own needs when appropriate. They also began creating new opportunities to connect with God in order to deepen their own spiritual relationship. Through their engagement in this intervention, the members of the CDT were engaged in their own spiritual formation. They were being transformed by God through this process, giving validity to the curriculum and its goals.

### ***Kenosis***

The Christ hymn tells us that Jesus “emptied himself,” or practiced kenosis. In order to expand the mission of God, he willingly set his own nature and agendas aside for the good of God’s mission. The members of the CDT also participated in kenosis in various ways throughout their time together. They emptied their own agendas to come and participate in this process, sacrificing their time and activities to help me and the congregation. They became vulnerable to one another, sharing their lives and even their struggles with each other. It was their practice of kenosis in their own lives and in their interactions with one another that allowed the group to succeed.

All of the members of the CDT practiced kenosis in their willingness to participate in this project. They all have professional careers that are demanding of their time and energy. In addition, they all have families that need their attention and presence, yet they made time in their busy schedules to participate in this intervention. During the evaluation session Vicky joked, saying, “Do you know how many Rockets’ games I have had to miss for this project?” Although she was kidding, her response reminded me that these individuals sacrificed their time and attention to help in this project. In our last session together, Sara remarked that originally the thought of giving up time with her kids and having to potentially postpone projects at work were daunting to her. Sacrificing that time to be with the CDT, however, helped her feel “spiritually filled”; she felt that she was gaining far more than she had given up. “Monday nights are like free nights now,” she stated. Kenosis does require us to empty ourselves for the sake of something else; the returns, however, are often more than we originally sacrificed.

The CDT also practiced kenosis through their time together. Although most of these individuals were familiar with one another, none of them knew the others well. They were relative strangers before this process began. As a result, the members of the CDT were forced to develop a deep relationship quickly as they engaged in this intervention together. The group found different ways to begin sharing life together. Many of our sessions began with discussions about life, family, work, and college football. Although most of these responses originally went uncoded, I realized later that these were ways in which the group was learning about and opening up to one another. The group was developing a level of intimacy that took time and required trust; that trust was built in both the mundane moments and the spiritual sharing. In our final session together, Allen mentioned that he had really enjoyed being able to connect with this group and sought the others out on Sunday mornings; all of the participants echoed their sentiments. Sara said she would miss the other CDT members and their weekly actions. Both of these responses showed that the group was developing a strong relationship with one another.

These relationships were a vital part of both spiritual formation and kenosis. They were able to create a space that was comfortable for intimacy and vulnerability. In our second session together the group remained absolutely silent for more than a minute when they were asked the question “What did you learn about God from the week’s spiritual practice?” Finally, Sara spoke reluctantly, and others slowly joined the discussion. Part of that hesitation could stem from the practices selected: practicing the presence of God and specific examen of conscience. Also, these spiritual direction questions were unfamiliar to most of the participants before participating in this



intervention. By the eighth session, however, the participants were sharing some of the more intimate details of life and spiritual growth. The spiritual practice for the eighth session involved service, intentionally trying to serve someone that they found it difficult to like or want to serve. Vicky shared about having to serve a family member that was consistently leaving dirty dishes in the sink, something that Vicky loathes. She resolved to do it anytime she saw those dishes. The more she served, however, the more frustrated she became that she was not hearing any gratitude or appreciation from that individual. She stated that she had the actions of a servant but not the attitude. Her vulnerability with her struggles and attitude then opened the door for the other CDT members to share their own feelings and experiences.

This vulnerability was a blessing to the group and facilitated the process of spiritual formation within the members. In the evaluation session, Sara mentioned that the smaller group allowed everyone to become more comfortable with one another and develop trust in one another. Others agreed, and Vicky said that the greatest blessing from the process was the development of these relationships.

The CDT's group cohesion would not have been possible without their kenotic spirit. They were willing to sacrifice their time and energy for the sake of the congregation, the project, and one another. They practiced humility and vulnerability by opening up their own hearts and lives and sharing their joys and struggles together. This kenosis allowed the CDT to develop spiritually simultaneously with the development of the curriculum.

### ***Phronesis***

The Christ hymn begins with an admonition: “In your relationships with one another have the same *phronesis* as was in Christ Jesus.” As stated before, *phronesis* is “a pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.” It is not just an attitude or mindset; it is a way of being. The goal of the curriculum was that it would help develop a Christlike *phronesis* as the basis of spiritual leadership. The process of developing the curriculum, however, also helped develop a Christlike *phronesis* in the CDT members. They began to connect what they were learning and studying to other areas of their lives; they began to ask deep questions about God and challenge their preconceptions about theology, spirituality, and leadership; and they came to a greater understanding of themselves through this process.

One of the ways in which the CDT participants began to develop a Christian *phronesis* was in making connections to other areas of their lives. These connections were from both the past and the present. Vicky often connected discussions of congregational leadership to the churches in which they were members in Malaysia and Australia; she also shared how she has experienced differences in leadership in the various denominations of which she has been a part. Don often connected insights from the sessions to his job, the place in which he leads. He also spoke of his time as an elder in another congregation and the difficulties he encountered in that work as a congregational leader. Allen spoke of his life growing up as a minister’s son as well as how these lessons were changing the way he acted as a dad and husband. Sara shared parts of life from work to family to growing up Baptist and the differences that entailed. Each one also made various connections to our own congregation, looking at our

leadership<sup>9</sup> and practices in light of what we were studying together. Vicky even came in during one of the sessions and her first statement was, “The Lord’s Supper comment on Sunday said exactly what we’ve been studying about Jesus this week!”

This was especially poignant from one of the spiritual practices. During our reflection on the palms up/palms down exercise, three of the participants mentioned how the practice had made a difference in their lives. Don stated that simply sitting quietly, being with God and releasing the pressures of life, gave him a lot of quiet time by himself, “a luxury I have not had in a long time.” Sara stated that it originally felt “hokey,” but by the end of the week she realized that those moments allowed her to release the anger that she had felt during the day. Vicky said that this exercise made her realize that her life was simply too busy now; when she was living in Australia, she was able to take this kind of time, but now she was having a difficult time wanting to turn her palms down and let go of the things of life. As she did so, however, she “felt a weight coming off as [she] released [her] fears, cares, [and] worries... Releasing things helped the tension go out.” Allen did not like this exercise, but the next week found a practice (particular examen of conscience) that truly connected with the issues of his life. He stated that this examination of his own life, his actions and attitudes, was changing the way that he prayed. “My prayers are now more of a reflection on the realities of who I am, not just on what I want from God,” Allen stated.

The CDT’s participation in reflection and spiritual practices began to change the way that they experienced other areas of their lives. They became more reflective and

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9. These leaders included both the formal leaders (elders and deacons) and informal leaders (ministry facilitators, women who are leading but not given formal titles, etc.) within the congregation.

introspective about their actions and their attitudes. They began to look for how God was present in their daily life and become conscious of his guidance. Sara talked about how she often went home and shared what she was learning with her husband; it gave them lots to talk about and opened up a deeper spiritual connection in their marriage. *Phronesis* does not just concern our thoughts but, instead, is about the conduct of the entirety of life. Throughout our time together I saw how the members of the CDT were being transformed through this intervention, even as they shaped the intervention itself.

Second, the members of the CDT came to a deeper understanding of theology, spirituality, and leadership. Numerous insights occurred throughout the course of this intervention.

Our examination of Philippians and the Christ hymn brought about a number of theological discussions. One of the most intense discussions that took place was on Jesus's "consideration" in Phil 2:6. Sara had a difficult time comprehending the meaning of this passage; in her thinking, Jesus was God and therefore would not have given the incarnation "a second thought; he just would have done it." The rest of the CDT processed this together, reflecting on various passages such as Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane and the temptations of Christ as examples of Jesus's conscious decisions to follow God's plan. This took a significant portion of our time as the group wrestled with these questions together; the discussion, however, had a profound impact on the questions included in the curriculum.<sup>10</sup> This also helped the team learn to trust one another, search through Scripture together, and discuss the challenges that arise in the midst of

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10. See the information and questions included in the leader guide for session 4, located in appendix G.

theological examination. Additionally, it inspired Sara to begin a new practice for 2016. She resolved to read through the whole Bible in the year, reflect on the words she read, and write down any doubts or questions that arose through this process. She shared that with the team and then reiterated it in our final evaluation session: “Our time together has made me read the Bible differently; it has changed my perspective.” In that final evaluation, Vicky also stated that she thought that working through the same Scripture would get boring, but approaching it with different emphases helped her see God, Jesus, and theology in very different lights each time; it never became redundant. All the members remarked on how their theological perspectives had been shaped by this experience.

The members of the CDT also came to a new understanding of spirituality. During the retreat they were asked to define the terms “spiritual formation” and “spirituality.” Each CDT member had a different definition and different examples; these examples primarily revolved around an individual’s relationship with God. The working definition of spiritual formation, however, was new to most of the members,<sup>11</sup> especially the communal focus and the external motivation. Many of the spiritual practices that were introduced in the midst of this project were new to the CDT; some of the members had participated in a few of the practices before, but not all of them. Allen later remarked that there were enough spiritual disciplines that were introduced that all the CDT members were able to find which ones were most helpful in their own lives and begin to use them to draw closer to God. They shared the spiritual practices that had most helped them. In

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11. Spiritual formation is “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.” Greenman, “Spiritual Formation,” 24.

our first session together Don remarked that *lectio divina* was incredibly difficult and uncomfortable for him. It felt very Catholic, both in its Latin name and its method of interpretation.<sup>12</sup> In the final evaluation, however, Don stated that he felt this method of reading Scripture—and the time we had spent going through the Christ hymn—“undermines the Church of Christ way of thinking that there is only ‘one right way’ to read a passage; everyone has a different perspective and different experiences, which colors our interpretations.” Thus Don’s comments suggest that practices such as *lectio divina* made a significant impact on how he reads and interprets Scripture.

The CDT also developed a different attitude and perspective of leadership through this process. In the retreat and the first few sessions, the CDT members still clung to a picture of secular leadership that emphasized charisma, strength, and decision-making. Even later in the process, one of the biggest discussions was whether service of others was a necessary characteristic of leadership.<sup>13</sup> In the final session, Don remarked that people could be servants without being leaders but leaders should always be servants of others. Our views on effective leadership changed throughout this project, as well. The CDT came to a number of conclusions. First, there are intense risks with leaders who do not have spirituality or a nourishing relationship with God. Second, it is probably easier to take people who are spiritual and then teach them these leadership principles than it is to take strong leaders and teach them how to be spiritual. Third, leaders do not have to be

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12. Don’s comments stem from his background in very conservative Churches of Christ. In his background, anything that seemed Catholic was instantly rejected. “Don’t call it anything too Latin.... But that’s my bias!” He repeated similar statements later about Ignatian examen.

13. One of the ongoing discussions that took place in this vein was about whether someone who takes out the trash is a leader. That discussion is also reflected in session 6 of the curriculum.

dynamic or have many of the characteristics of strong, natural-born leaders to succeed. Those leaders must be able to make decisions when they are needed, however.

Their understanding of effective leadership was reshaped by this time together. Allen stated that it changed the way he looked at congregations and their leadership. He stated, “I hope they are doing these things [spiritual practices] in their own lives, and I will be looking for that.... If I ever take on a position of spiritual leadership one day, I will make sure I am connecting with God in my own life, as well.” The CDT remarked how they saw these aspects in the leaders of WUCC, but also how they would like to see these leaders continue to grow and develop. Throughout this process the CDT’s understanding of leadership continued to be transformed by the ongoing discussions of spirituality and leadership that are encountered in Christ’s *phronesis*.

Finally, I noticed that the members of the CDT began to see themselves differently through this process. Sara no longer wants to settle for reading the Bible in the same way; she is now actively engaging her doubts and questions. She is also sharing her faith with her spouse, friends, and family in different ways. She says that her way of participating in church has changed; she now is more willing to find ways in which to serve. Vicky talked about what she was learning about herself and how she was going to have a different attitude towards those that she was serving. Don talked about how this process was changing the way he interacted with his employees at work; his leadership style was developing through his reflection on Christ’s example. Allen’s prayer life began to change throughout the process; he also began to look for ways in which he could actively engaged God in his own life, realizing a deeper need for him.

As a whole, the group changed in their *phronesis*. In the beginning they were reluctant to talk about their insights from the spiritual discipline. They were uncomfortable with language such as “What did you learn about God?” and “What might God be trying to teach you through this?” There were periods of silence and a reluctance to share. In the later sessions, however, the group actively engaged in this discussion with one another. They could point out where they were seeing God in their own lives and speaking about God’s guidance. Thus their *phronesis*, their way of thinking and feeling and acting, changed throughout this project. They grew spiritually as they were challenged and stretched through new spiritual practices. Their theology was challenged and reshaped by their interactions together. Their attitudes towards leadership, church, and service were changed. They developed a different *phronesis* from that which they had in the beginning.

### ***Spiritual Leadership***

I also noticed that CDT’s views of spiritual leadership over the course of this project. None of the CDT members are in formal positions of leadership in the congregation: Don previously served as an elder in two congregations but does not in ours; Allen has taught Bible classes on occasion, but is not in a formal position of leadership; Sara and Vicky are the wives of deacons, and they have both taught children’s Bible classes, but do not serve in any formal capacity. Indeed, one of the selection criteria for the CDT was specifically not to be in formal positions of leadership. As a result, they served as outsiders evaluating congregational leadership while also having a unique perspective: wives of deacons, former elder, and the son of a minister. As a result, the



CDT provided an interesting insight into spiritual leadership development throughout the process of writing the curriculum.

At the retreat, the CDT gave great feedback during the first session (“Secular and Spiritual Leadership”). The three charts that we discussed were helpful to understanding the different forms of leadership. Originally, I presented the missional pyramid as the model of leadership upon which our curriculum would be based. As our sessions progressed, however, the CDT pointed out that the charts did not fit the process that our curriculum was developing. It was through their personal insights and comments that I developed the flow chart included in the curriculum in sessions 1 and 9.

Throughout our sessions, the CDT members often reminded me that the curriculum needed to come back to spiritual leadership, not just generic spiritual formation for Christians. They constantly reminded me that each question and each session needed to hinge on developing spiritual leadership potential. In almost every meeting Don asked us to repeat the definition of spiritual leadership, both so he could remind himself and so we could remember that this was the point of the project itself.

In our time together the CDT’s perspectives on leadership began to change. During the retreat they often thought about leaders as being charismatic, dynamic, good with people, and good decision-makers. While “connected to God” was high on their list, it was not one of the first mentioned nor was it well defined in their minds. Simply after participating in the retreat, their perspectives began to shift. As we did a *lectio divina* over Philippians 1:1-11, they began to talk about leadership from this passage. Don stated that “leaders must have people in their hearts.” Allen stated leaders “must be against

sophistry; instead, it is about God's glory." Vicky posited that "Leaders are servants of Christ and have the fruits of righteousness."

Throughout the sessions they continued to demonstrate how their own views of leadership were changing. During the fourth session, the group discussed the ways in which leaders could be decisive while also practicing care for the congregation and submission to one another and to God. As a group, the CDT determined that Philippians 2:3-4 provided guidance for leadership: leaders examine their own motives, practice humility, listen and consider others, but also listen to their own interests, as well. A few weeks later Don summarized this idea by saying, "Leaders are called to shepherding, not just governance."

In our evaluation session together, I sought to discover how their perspectives of leadership had changed. Many of the opposite points of view were presented, without people being aware. Don stated that "leaders do not have to be dynamic to be effective." Others stated that there were great risks associated with being a dynamic, natural leader but not having a strong, spiritual foundation. Thus many of the perspectives they had held when they began this process had shifted by the end of our time together, primarily through their experiences working together to create this curriculum.

By examining our sessions together, I was able to see how the CDT had changed in terms of spiritual formation, kenosis, *phronesis*, and spiritual leadership. They had drawn closer to God through this time; they had been introduced to new spiritual practices; and they had begun to examine their preconceptions of God through this process. They also became more open to God and one another, sharing life's joys and struggles. Their thinking changed and developed as they participated in this project. Also,

their understanding of spiritual leadership had changed as they developed this curriculum together.

### **Insider Evaluation**

The second angle of triangulation is insider evaluation. I wanted to ascertain how the CDT viewed the efficacy of the curriculum. Thus I developed a short evaluation form that would allow the group to consider the effects this curriculum might have on our congregation in the future.

During the final session we had dinner together, and we also had an informal conversation about their views of the process. The members of the CDT were all very positive about the experience. They valued the camaraderie and the relationships they had formed within the group, and they suggested that any group using this curriculum should limit the number of participants to allow greater intimacy like they had experienced. Vicky mentioned how she originally thought it would get “boring and monotonous” to study the same passage each week, but she was excited to discover new meaning each time. Allen was thankful that the curriculum introduced numerous spiritual disciplines to try, allowing everyone to find some practices that worked for them. Sara mentioned that this project had changed the way that she read the Bible, interacted with God, and talked with others about her faith. It also changed the way she participated in the life and worship of our congregation. Allen stated that it specifically changed the way he viewed leadership and that he would continue praying for church leaders and encouraging them in their spiritual walk. Don showed that his views of leadership had altered significantly, and he expressed the need for deeper spirituality for leaders to be effective. This informal conversation added validity to my views as a participant observer that the process of

developing the curriculum had impacted the CDT in terms of their spiritual formation and understanding of spiritual leadership.

After dinner, the group was given the evaluation question and asked to spend approximately twenty minutes imagining the scenario and answering the question.<sup>14</sup> Essentially, they were asked to imagine that a small group of leaders from WUCC went through the curriculum together; what changes might we observe in the spiritual lives and spiritual leadership of the participants? Afterwards, we gathered again for a group discussion about this question.

Based on our weekly sessions together and the CDT members' own discussion of how their perspectives had changed, I expected the conversation to begin with a positive tone. The first response, however, was, "Well, it is possible that we won't see any changes at all." This then led to a discussion from the group about why a congregation might not change. These statements were varied, but they included some of the following: the leaders might resist the process and not be formed spiritually; the curriculum might produce timidity and fear in the leaders, afraid to make a decision because of a desire to put others first and be obedient to God;<sup>15</sup> and spiritual formation might be difficult to notice in the participants since these practices are individual and private. This conversation lasted approximately ten minutes as the group discussed how the curriculum might not work. One CDT member finally asked, "What kind of difference would this make behind closed doors?"

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14. This evaluation question is included in appendix E.

15. Allen stated plainly, "I am not sure that this curriculum will necessarily create more leaders [in the future], because I think there are some things that have been covered in this curriculum that might create timid or hesitant leaders as opposed to the types that would be willing to step forward" into leadership. Others then built off of this statement.

As that conversation progressed, I became confused, even despondent. The CDT had always been affirming of the leaders at WUCC; why did they think the leaders would respond negatively to the curriculum? The CDT had already discussed the differences this project had made in their own individual lives and understanding; why did they assume that the same would not happen for others? Had the curriculum failed in its main goal, establishing a deeper spirituality for leaders that would influence the way they guided the congregation? I allowed the discussion to continue without interjecting my own thoughts and opinions because I wanted to hear their comments.

Sara spoke up timidly, saying, “I would like to think it would make some pretty significant changes.” She then stated that she thought that the leaders would look at their own lives and begin to ask questions about themselves, specifically in regard to their role in the church and their motivations. They would also begin to see people differently, both inside and outside the church. Vicky thought that the curriculum excelled in spiritual formation. She stated that participants were “bound to find one or two new ways to deepen their faith.” She thought the curriculum would bring about spiritual renewal for those who were stagnant and strengthen those who were weak. Allen added that it would help them grow and develop in new ways spiritually, especially if these participants made a concerted effort to integrate these spiritual practices into their lives. He also stated that it would help the participants come to a deeper understanding of Jesus’s life and ministry. Don stated that it would help them develop deeper relationships with one another and with people inside the church. Sara added that these leaders “would hopefully interact differently with people inside and outside of the church, changing the question from ‘what can you do for me?’ to ‘how can I serve you?’”

As the conversation continued, it became more apparent that all of the participants thought the curriculum would help develop a deeper spirituality within the group and participants as they spent time in the Bible and implemented the spiritual practices in their lives. Although Sara did not say this publicly, her paper ended with this comment: “They [the participants] will question and love with a bigger purpose—to become like Jesus.” Vicky echoed this comment, stating that she believed that it would help these leaders develop spiritual maturity and wisdom, which would enable a congregation’s leadership to help lead the congregation in spiritual formation.

As I reflected on this interaction later, I came to a number of conclusions. First, there were parts of the conversation at dinner that had been more negative. One CDT member stated that he had thought that the WUCC leadership would be more involved in the process and was surprised that they were not brought in more often. Others commented, however, on some of the defensiveness and negativity they had heard at the retreat session with the leadership and were thankful that the curriculum could be presented to them whole. I believe this interaction changed some of the ways in which the CDT thought about the response that leaders might have to this curriculum; subconsciously, they connected the initial negativity they experienced from some leaders with how they assumed the participants would respond to the process. Second, one of the topics of discussion during dinner was also how the delay associated with conducting this project over the holidays had taken away some of the momentum. Two CDT members made statements along this line, which was true. Much of the momentum was lost as we worked on the curriculum, and we had to review a lot of material to keep everyone informed and engaged. Thus their thoughts about the process of the intervention could

have contributed to their thoughts about its outcome. Third, the curriculum for sessions 9 and 10 were completed in one meeting together instead of the typical two; additionally, Sara was unable to attend that CDT meeting due to work constraints. The group had less time to think through those lessons and also less time to review them before we met together for the final evaluation. Thus as a whole the CDT had spent less time with those lessons, which focus more on leadership in terms of purpose, vision, and methodology.

Another challenge was driven by the lack of a coherent definition of spiritual leadership. Although I had defined spiritual leadership for them from the beginning, I should have continued reminding them of this definition each time we met together. This insight is now reflected in the leader guide, which asks the leader to do a brief synopsis each week of the purpose of the curriculum and the content of the previous lessons.

Finally, one of the major difficulties was a continued discussion of “What, exactly, is leadership?” Part of this was driven by Church of Christ polity; although we talk about elders and deacons as both being part of “the leadership,” those positions are extremely different. They are not a hierarchy in which one “progresses” from being a deacon to being an elder; instead, they often require two different personality types. At times the CDT lost sight of how this would apply to both groups and would think about one group or the other. I also lacked a coherent understanding of the exact target group for this curriculum and what spiritual leadership meant across those various groups. In my original analysis I believed that this curriculum should be for both the formal leaders (elders and deacons) and informal leaders (ministry leaders, small group facilitators, and Bible class teachers.) This group would include both men and women, although positions of formal leadership are restricted to men at WUCC. Spiritual leadership means different

things for each different group, however. While ideas of spiritual growth might overlap, the exact ways in which spiritual leadership might be practiced would be different from group to group. This probably deflected the discussion into areas that were unimportant.

Although the group did have some negative reflections about the curriculum, more time was spent on positive outcomes (twenty minutes) than negative consequences (ten minutes). Although the conversation began in a negative fashion, it did come around to hope. As a whole, the CDT believes that this curriculum can have a positive impact on the leadership of WUCC, helping them develop a different understanding of spiritual leadership that will redefine their role within our congregation.

### **Outsider Evaluation—Outside Expert Analysis**

The third angle of evaluation was provided by an outside expert. Because of their independence from the intervention, outside experts serve as helpful resources in qualitative research, allowing for an evaluation of the project that is free from many of the biases that might limit the insiders and researcher. I had previously asked Dr. Houston Heflin to evaluate this curriculum. Dr. Heflin is an associate professor of ministry at Abilene Christian University, and he earned a doctor of education that specifically focused on spiritual formation and Christian education. At the conclusion of this intervention, I sent the curriculum and leader guide to him for evaluation. I asked Dr. Heflin to examine this curriculum to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and to write a one- to two-page synopsis of his findings.

Overall, Dr. Heflin found this curriculum was effective in helping formulate Christlike leadership within a congregation. He found the emphasis on spiritual disciplines as the method for developing spiritual maturity to be “useful for church



leaders who seek to grow deeper in their personal spiritual formation and in their understanding of Christlike leadership.”<sup>16</sup> He thought that the material was well-organized, easy to follow, and provided a diversity of material that would make this curriculum enjoyable and helpful.

Dr. Heflin highlighted two main areas that he found helpful in the curriculum. The first was the emphasis on leadership and service. He thought that the question about “taking out the trash” and its later engagement with a quotation by Rick Warren about servant-hearted leadership to be an important shift in the discussion. He found this discussion to be highly relevant to current understandings of leadership, both inside and outside of the church. Second, he appreciated how the curriculum moved toward intentional engagement in leadership. In session 9, the group participants were asked to begin considering whom they might seek to disciple from their spheres of influence.<sup>17</sup> He thought this was a great assignment for them to consider and try to implement in their own lives, to help them develop in their leadership.

Dr. Heflin also pointed out some areas in which the curriculum might need to be changed to better achieve its goals. First, he pointed out some areas in which questions were ambiguous or needed clarification, many of which have since been addressed. Second, Dr. Heflin pointed out that, while the curriculum engages Scripture well, there is almost no Scripture present in the first lesson. This was something that I had not considered previously. As I considered his insight, I decided that the best way to address the dichotomy between the definitions of spiritual and secular leadership was by

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16. This quote is taken from Houston Heflin, “Assessment of Curriculum,” personal correspondence with the researcher, March 13, 2016.

17. This question is found on page 78 in the Leader’s Guide.

emphasizing these areas, not reflecting on Scripture. In addition, Scripture does become the focal point of the *lectio divina* exercises afterwards. Thus I determined that this was the best move for this curriculum overall.

Dr. Heflin's third insight was the most helpful. He had noted that the curriculum integrated a lot of Scripture, but it lacked an overview reading of the book of Philippians. He stated:

"One question I have is where or when the groups would be reading the entire book of Philippians together? Would they only be looking each week at the specific scriptures you have highlighted as inspiration for this curriculum, or will they read through the entire book at some point? I suppose it is not necessary to read the entire letter in one sitting, although there is some benefit to hearing the themes this way."

In both the leader's guide and the curriculum it states that the group should read through the book of Philippians multiple times throughout this curriculum. While this was stated, it was never emphasized, and the curriculum never mentions this request again. Dr. Heflin's assessment was correct: the curriculum is best understood in light of the book of Philippians as a whole. The best way to get a sense of the book is to emphasize its reading in entirety, not just in small sections throughout the curriculum. In the revised version of this curriculum, I plan to emphasize the reading of Philippians more clearly.

Overall, Dr. Heflin thought the material would achieve its stated goal of creating spiritual leaders for WUCC. He stated, "This material would be useful for church leaders who seek to grow deeper in their personal spiritual formation and in their understanding of Christlike leadership."<sup>18</sup> This third angle of assessment demonstrates the efficacy of this curriculum and provides validity to the achievement of this intervention's goal.

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18. Personal correspondence, Houston Heflin, March 13, 2016.

### **Final Reflections**

This intervention was evaluated through data triangulation, utilizing insights from the researcher (field notes), insiders (evaluation by CDT), and an independent expert.

Based on the results provided through triangulation, we can assume that this intervention will help develop spiritual leadership within a congregation. Chapter 5 will explore some ways in which this curriculum can be used with the WUCC and some of the changes I hope it will produce.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This intervention demonstrated the need for spiritual leadership development among the leadership of the WUCC. This intervention posited that the development of a curriculum that addresses these needs, written by members with the context of WUCC in mind, was the first step to addressing this need. Chapter 4 outlined the results of this intervention, demonstrating the efficacy of this intervention through three angles of triangulation: researcher evaluation (field notes), insider evaluation (questionnaire), and outsider evaluation (independent expert). This curriculum helps address the current need of the WUCC to develop spiritual leadership through spiritual formation.

In chapter 5 I will seek to address the ramifications of this project as well as chart a trajectory for its implementation within WUCC. Along the way I will also discuss the limits of this project, its applicability, and its impact on those who have participated.

#### **Limits, Reflexivity, and Credibility**

This project was limited by a number of factors. First, it represents the work of five members of the WUCC, not the church as a whole. While these five members represent a variety of ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, and life experiences, they cannot represent all of the views present even within our small congregation. Second, the polity of the Churches of Christ and our definitions of leadership make this task ambiguous.

The Churches of Christ often describe leadership as ministers, elders, and deacons. Yet each of those positions has distinct roles and responsibilities, which come with different needs. Trying to address all of these areas was impossible through the course of this curriculum. As a whole, however, all of these leaders could benefit from a deeper understanding of how spiritual leadership could transform their current role. Third, this curriculum was meant to address the needs of WUCC, not the contexts of other churches. Without further implementation and testing, it is impossible to know how this curriculum could impact other congregations. The intervention is limited in its scope by what it was designed to do: develop a curriculum that would foster spiritual leadership development at WUCC.

Within the insider evaluation, there were moments of slippage. During the final evaluation the group started the discussion by talking about the possibility of no change occurring. While this discussion did not achieve the expectations I had hoped to see, it helped present a case study in what might occur if a leadership team does not internalize the process of spiritual formation. This discussion highlighted what might happen if leaders work from positions of power, pride, and influence, rather than adopting a Christlike *phronesis*. As the discussion continued, however, it became clearer that the group thought the curriculum would result in spiritual leadership formation as long as the leaders were willing to invest in the process.

Additionally, this project is limited by the issue of reflexivity. As the researcher, I was both a participant in this project and an observer. My field notes are limited by my own perspectives and experiences with the group. This was a project that I was passionate about, and I was deeply invested in this process for the sake of the

congregation. My perspective helped shape this curriculum, which undoubtedly included some of my own biases and preconceived notions of leadership, ecclesiology, and Christology. The way in which I researched, taught, and provided resources helped guide the outcome of this process.

To be fair, however, it is impossible to be truly objective in the intervention process. By its very nature, an intervention requires a perspective and a plan for addressing the need. My use of triangulation, however, helps to overcome these biases by presenting the perspectives of three different evaluation angles. Based on these results, we can assume that this intervention will be successful in helping develop spiritual leadership within WUCC.

### **Applicability**

This curriculum was not developed with the goal of wide dissemination. It is intended for use by WUCC as a means to foster spiritual leadership formation for the existing leadership. To that extent, I believe that this project is an integral way to achieve these goals. The methods by which this intervention proceeded would apply in diverse contexts, as well. These methods include the model of engagement, the theology of spiritual leadership, and the curriculum itself.

This model of engagement with the congregation is a vital way to allow members of the congregation to participate in the process of shaping the congregation's praxis and practical theology. Often the process of change and transformation is delegated to the leaders of the church. This intervention, however, brought a diverse sampling of the congregation's members into the discussion, allowing them to listen to and interact with the leadership as well as let their own perspectives and voices be heard. This method of

engagement provides a vital exchange of ideas, allowing the church to set a vision that is shaped by the congregation, not just the leadership.

Additionally, the theology of spiritual leadership would be a vital resource to other churches. The theology itself is drawn from a wide variety of sources and thus could be useful to other congregations from different perspectives and backgrounds. A congregation could utilize this theology as a resource as it shapes its own understanding of spiritual leadership within its context.

I believe that this curriculum would be transferrable to other congregations, as well. This curriculum seeks to address a dynamic that is present in many congregations: the need for spiritual maturity among the leadership. Many leaders operate from a position of managing or influencing rather than spiritually leading the congregation because it is what they have always seen modeled. This curriculum, however, uses Christ as the example of spiritual leadership, something that could then be applied to a specific context or congregation. This *phronesis* is not based on one individual culture but, rather, on the example of Jesus. It is impossible to know how well this curriculum could translate to other cultures; however, I believe other churches in a Western context can utilize this curriculum to help their leadership develop a Christlike *phronesis*.

### **Transformations Experienced through the Intervention**

One of the greatest joys of this intervention is recognizing the various transformations that took place over the course of the past six months. The curriculum itself changed as the group helped shape and refine its theological perspectives. The members of the CDT experienced changes in their own spiritual lives as they implemented new spiritual practices and were influenced by the process. The

congregation has been changed through an interaction with this process and its influence on the participants. Finally, my own ministry and life have changed as a result of this intervention. By examining these changes, I will demonstrate the efficacy of this intervention in the life and ministry of WUCC.

### ***Changes within the Curriculum***

One of the most interesting developments that occurred through this process was the way in which the project itself transformed. Originally, this project was meant to address the need to develop a deeper spirituality within the current leadership team while also being used as a tool for developing new leaders for WUCC. These two areas, while similar, need to be addressed different ways. The current need within the congregational leadership team was to develop a deeper spiritual life in order to work effectively as spiritual leaders. The development of new leadership demands a deeper discussion as to the roles of leaders, the characteristics and qualities of potential leaders, and discernment as to God's direction for new leaders. While this curriculum could be used in this manner, this project simply could not seek to address both needs.

Another way in which the curriculum changed was in its definition of spiritual leadership. Originally, I was working with a missional model of spiritual leadership that emphasized vision and action.<sup>1</sup> As we progressed in the group sessions, however, it became clearer that the vision of spiritual leadership that we were describing did not fit any of the leadership models that we could find. As a result, I created a new model that would reflect the process of spiritual formation that is occurring among the leadership with a goal of developing a Christian *phronesis* expressing itself in thoughts, perceptions,

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1. This model is outlined in ch. 2.



and actions.<sup>2</sup> This model is still a work in progress, however. The curriculum asks the participants to interact with the model and find where it might be deficient or need to be updated. As we utilize this curriculum with other groups I expect that this model will continue adapting to fit the realities of WUCC.

This intervention brought about changes in the curriculum as well as changes in the participants and the congregation. We will now look at those ongoing transformations.

### ***Impact on the Participants***

While it is impossible to know the extended effects of this project on the spiritual lives of the CDT, we can begin to ascertain its impact by examining the changes that have already transpired. The CDT's participation in this intervention has changed some of their immediate practices. Sara is in the midst of an intensive Bible study, wrestling with her questions and doubts. Allen has joined an accountability group to continue growing and being formed in community. Vicky has become more intentional in her prayer and devotional life. Don has become more engaged in the life of the church, and he mentioned recently how this project has transformed his views of congregational leadership. All of the members have remarked about how their views of God, Jesus, and the spiritual life are different because of the time we spent working together.

This intervention has also helped the group want to engage in the church in different ways. Recently, Allen has begun helping teach Bible class at times, and preaches at a local retirement community once a month. Sara expressed interest in starting some sort of small group such as a book club or Bible study, helping a small

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2. This model can also be found in ch. 2.

group of people learn and grow more in the faith. These four individuals are beginning to implement what they have learned within the context of the congregation. It is exciting to see what might become of this experience, and I hope that in six months or a year I will have a better understanding of the impact this has made on the CDT.

***Impact on the Congregation and Leadership***

I presented the elders and ministers with the first draft of the curriculum approximately one month ago, and they have all perused the work. They have not participated in the curriculum itself as of yet, but they were excited to see how it might be implemented within the church. This curriculum has already started paying dividends for the leaders, however. As a result of this project, we began a discussion about intentional discipleship as a function of leadership. All of the elders and ministers have identified individuals from the congregation that they want to focus on in order to work together towards deeper spiritual maturity. This has led Roy, our associate minister, to start a discipleship group with four young adults from WUCC. This group is meeting weekly in order to help one another grow closer to God.

The congregation, as a whole, has not been engaged in this process. Over the past few months, however, I have integrated some of the insights and information from this experience into sermons and Bible classes. Overall, people have been excited to hear some of the insights I have garnered from this time of study and reflection. There are plans in place for engaging the congregation with this material in a more organized fashion; I will discuss those in more detail below.

### ***Personal Impact***

This intervention has impacted my life and ministry in profound ways. I have grown in my views of spiritual leadership and developed deeper leadership abilities. I have also grown spiritually through this process. This project has helped me dream about the future and set a vision for how I hope to implement these insights into both my life and my ministry with the congregation.

When I began this project, I stated that leadership was not a field in which I was interested but it was the pertinent need facing the church. As I began researching this field, however, I found great joy in discovering the rich insights from leadership theory. Much of what I read, however, pertained to models of leadership that had little to do with spiritual formation. Often, leadership material revolved around competence, confidence, and control, even while proclaiming other ideals. Spiritual formation, while often mentioned, usually received only a passing discussion. This project allowed me to combine my interest in spiritual formation with leadership development and created a new area for me to explore. As a result, I have become excited about spiritual leadership in the context of a local congregation. As a minister at WUCC, I am excited to see how God might use this curriculum in our congregation. It has already begun helping the members of the CDT begin to take leadership in the congregation in various ways, and I believe that others who participate in this curriculum will also be spiritually formed and start looking for areas in which they can lead.

I also developed my own leadership skills in the context of this intervention. Throughout this process I was the “expert,” instructing the group, setting the agenda, and shaping the curriculum. For me, this leadership was difficult. I often like to lead from the

sidelines, allowing others to be in front. This project, however, forced me to direct the process in most facets. I also helped manage the group, keeping them on subject and working towards the weekly theme. Thus I was able to develop my ability to lead from the front. Ironically, however, I am one who likes to retain control of a process; I have a difficult time allowing others to shape the agenda or have a hand in the process. This intervention, however, required me to engage the group in ways that allowed them to help shape the narrative and final product. Thus I was also able to grow in my ability to work within a group to achieve a particular result. This curriculum bears witness to their significant insights; it has been shaped in profound ways by the interaction with the group. For instance, Don always kept us focused on leadership, Allen always asked profound questions that changed the tone of the conversation, Vicky would remind us of the need to guide the curriculum in a linear way to help the participants grasp the concepts, and Sara would often have us dig deeper into the theology. These members used their own skills and insights to benefit the group and the curriculum. This curriculum is the result of the CDT's work and perspectives, not just my own. I was also forced to delegate to others. The members of the CDT had numerous insights, writings, and comments that appear throughout the curriculum. Indeed, all of the *lectio divina* exercises from session 1 were written by the CDT. My own competence in leadership was greatly enhanced by guiding this intervention.

My own spirituality has been shaped by this intervention, as well. In addition to keeping the group accountable for their participation in spiritual practices, they kept me accountable, too. One week I had become very busy and did not engage in the exercises as I should have done, and one of the CDT members probed as to why I had not

participated. I was thankful that they were keeping track of my growth throughout this process. I intentionally picked two spiritual disciplines that I find difficult (journaling and confession); this process helped me engage God in ways that I had avoided before. I discovered spiritual practices that I had not attempted before and even found one that I have begun implementing daily (palms up/palms down prayer). Walking alongside others and hearing how they had been shaped by these experiences was also a wonderful reminder of the greatness of God. It strengthened my understanding of spiritual formation, reminding me that it was not just about my relationship with God but was also undertaken for the good of others. This process engaged my heart in significant ways as I grew closer to God and helped others do the same.

I was also deeply influenced by the work I did on the theology section. The time I spent reading Scripture, digging deeper into commentaries and engaging the Greek language, shaped my understanding of God and made me awestruck at the *phronesis* of Jesus. I developed a deeper respect for what Jesus accomplished and also came to the conclusion that following Jesus is more profound than I had believed before. As a result, I am excited about helping others come to this understanding as well through my teaching, encouraging, mentoring, and leading.

### ***Future Impact on the Congregation***

The next step for this curriculum is to implement it in various ways in our congregation. Some of these plans are already beginning. I plan on using this curriculum with a group of elders and deacons starting in the summer of 2016. My goal is to keep the group to six members, allowing for greater interaction and discussion. My hope is that some of these participants will then agree to serve as leaders or co-leaders for other

groups using this curriculum. Our associate minister plans on using this curriculum with a cadre of new small group leaders, nuancing it to look at small group leadership in a new light. He hopes that these leaders will see their role as spiritual formation for their small groups rather than just as facilitators. WUCC also hopes to appoint new elders by 2017; these leaders will work through this curriculum with potential new elders (and deacons) as they assume these roles.

I also plan on teaching a sermon series on spiritual leadership that will be informed by much of this material. While this will not be from the curriculum per se, it will be informed by the work that we did as a group in assembling this curriculum. I hope that WUCC will begin to view spiritual leadership in a different light, having different expectations for leaders than just congregational management and decision-making. Instead, I pray that WUCC will see leaders as people who demonstrate the *phronesis* of Christ in their own lives and are helping others do the same.

### **Questions for Future Research**

While this intervention has helped shape my understanding of spiritual leadership, there are still questions left to be answered. These questions involve culture, changes to the model of spiritual leadership, additional groups that could benefit from this curriculum, implications for vision-casting, and continued spiritual formation.

*Cultural Implications:* How will cultural perceptions and expectations of leadership influence the results of this curriculum? Houston is the most ethnically diverse city in the United States,<sup>3</sup> and our congregation is comprised of many different

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3. Kinder Institute for Urban Research, "Houston Region Grows More Racially/Ethnically Diverse, With Small Declines in Segregation: A Joint Report Analyzing Census Data from 1990, 2000, and 2010," 3. Available from [http://kinder.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Urban\\_Research\\_Center/Media/](http://kinder.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Urban_Research_Center/Media/)

nationalities and backgrounds. This question will profoundly shape the way in which this curriculum is integrated into our church and can be utilized by churches in other contexts.

*Additions to Model:* One of the questions that the curriculum asks is “What is missing from this model of spiritual leadership? How might you change or adapt it?” I believe that this model is a work in progress and is not in its final format. For instance, spiritual formation is not just the responsibility of the leadership; rather, God is at work in all of the members of the congregation. Therefore, the model might need to reflect God’s ongoing work with all of these individuals. I anticipate adapting this model as more groups interact with this curriculum.

*Additional Groups:* What other groups in the church could benefit from this curriculum? How might the informal leaders of the congregation (Bible class teachers, ministry leaders, and others) benefit from this discussion of spiritual leadership? How can it be adapted for various groups within the church (teens, young adults, small groups, parents, and others)? Would this curriculum help form additional leaders, helping them ascertain whether they might serve as spiritual leaders within the congregation? Would these models of leadership be helpful in all of these contexts, or would the understanding of leadership change as it shifts from an “institution” (i.e., church) to a “relationship” (i.e., family)?

*Vision-casting:* The final sessions in the curriculum (9 and 10) ask the group to contemplate “God’s preferred future,” both for the individual participant and for the church. The curriculum does not give much guidance on how to do this, however. This

could be the launching point for another study as the church seeks to understand what God wants them to be and do in its context. Who are we as a congregation? What gifts, talents, and abilities, as well as passions and hopes, has God given us? How might these areas align? As spiritual leaders, how do we begin ascertaining that vision and setting a trajectory for accomplishing that vision?

*Continued Spiritual Formation:* How can these leaders continue to grow and develop in their spiritual lives? This curriculum defines spiritual formation as “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”<sup>4</sup> It is an ongoing process, a never-ending journey that will not be fully accomplished until we are fully in the presence of God. This curriculum serves as a starting point, but necessitates an ongoing process of spiritual formation. While this is expected if the leaders teach this curriculum to others, they need ways in which they can continue to develop spiritually. How can these leaders continue to grow? How can they continue to develop a deeper Christlike *phronesis*?

While these are not all of the questions that arise from this curriculum, they are areas in which this curriculum could be applied and the results studied. Exploring these questions could be of great benefit to WUCC and other congregations seeking to develop spiritually formed leaders.

### **Conclusion**

This project was inspired by a desire to help the WUCC be conformed more into the image of Christ in every aspect of their lives. Specifically, I wanted to facilitate a way

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4. Greenman, “Spiritual Formation,” 24.



in which the leadership could be blessed and challenged to develop into deeper spiritual leaders who live and minister like Jesus. I know that my own life has been blessed through this process, and I have developed into a more spiritually mature minister as I have learned, guided, and been shaped through this process. I have been blessed to journey alongside a wonderful group of participants in the CDT who helped develop a curriculum to bless our congregation and leaders in just that way. I believe that the future is bright for the WUCC, and I am excited to see how the leaders can “have among [themselves] the *phronesis* of Christ Jesus” in every aspect of their lives.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** Formulating an Intentional Curriculum for Spiritual Leadership Development at West University Church of Christ

**Researcher:** Daniel McGraw  
Abilene Christian University

**Advisors:** Dr. Carson Reed  
Abilene Christian University

Dr. Richard Wright  
Abilene Christian University

**Process:** I, \_\_\_\_\_ understand I am being invited to participate in the creation of a curriculum for spiritual leadership and spiritual formation for the West University Church of Christ.

**Purpose:** This project will enlist a group of members from the congregation to formulate a curriculum for spiritual leadership development within the congregation. This process will focus on participation in spiritual disciplines that cultivate a pattern of leadership based on an imitation of the *phronesis* (mindset) of Jesus. This group will participate in a weekend retreat, as well as eight, one-hour sessions to work together as a team to create this curriculum. The retreat will take place in September 2015 and the weekly group sessions will stretch from September to November 2015. At the end of this process you will be given an open-ended questionnaire to help determine the effectiveness of the process and the curriculum. Upon signing this document, you understand that your insights and ideas may be incorporated into this project thesis and the curriculum itself.

**Potential Risks:** While the risks associated with this project are minimal, spiritual formation and group interaction can pose some risks to those participating. Spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines can be challenging and open one up to vulnerability; participants will be asked to protect the confidentiality of one another outside of the

context of the project. There is also the possibility of spiritual struggles and concerns in the context of this project. Additionally, there is the possibility of dispute or disagreements with others on the team. There is also the possibility of risk associated with working on a curriculum to be implemented by the leaders of the church. The leaders will know the identity of these individuals because of the time together on the retreat. The leaders might be offended by any perceived slight, risking a rift between these individuals.

The researcher will emphasize confidentiality throughout the context of this project. The group will be asked to keep all personal interactions, statements, and disputes confidential within the team. Also, all published quotations and responses will protect your anonymity.

**Potential Benefits:** Your participation in this process may provide the following benefits: (1) Increased understanding of spiritual formation and practices that can facilitate spiritual growth; (2) A deeper understanding of spiritual leadership and the roles of leaders within the congregation; (3) A greater calling into leadership within the congregation; and (4) The formulation of a curriculum that will help the existing and future leaders of the congregation grow and mature as spiritual leaders.

**Compensation:** There is no compensation provided for your participation in this research.

**Rights of Research Participants:** I have read all of the information provided above. I am satisfied in my understanding of this research project. Mr. McGraw has informed me about the nature of this project and the possible risks and benefits involved.

I understand my participation in the project is not mandatory and I may withdraw my participation at any time.

I understand all information I provide will be kept confidential at all times.

If I have any further questions or concerns, I can contact Mr. McGraw by telephone at (832) 312-8701 or by email at [daniel@westchurch.com](mailto:daniel@westchurch.com); Dr. Carson Reed by telephone at (325) 674-3732 or by email at [carson.reed@acu.edu](mailto:carson.reed@acu.edu); or the Institutional Review Board at Abilene Christian University by telephone at (325) 674-2885 or by email at [orsp@acu.edu](mailto:orsp@acu.edu).

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX B  
OUTLINE OF RETREAT SESSIONS

**Date of the Retreat:** September 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>

**Location:** West University Church of Christ

**Friday Evening:**

Worship – 10 minutes

Prayer – 5 minutes

Session 1: “What is Leadership?”

A. “Secular” Leadership:

- a. How would you define a leader?
  - i. Brainstorm on their own – 5 minutes
    - 1. Attributes
    - 2. Examples
  - ii. Discuss as a group
- b. Discuss various definitions of a leader from political, business, and social perspectives.
- c. Present the first two models of leadership: pyramid and inverted pyramid (see Chapter 1)

B. Spiritual leadership:

- a. What is spiritual leadership?
  - i. How might spiritual leadership differ from the perspectives we mentioned before?
  - ii. What are the similarities?
  - iii. What are the differences?
- b. The Kingdom perspective of leadership
  - i. Brief discussion of Jesus’s statements on leadership: Mark 10:42-45; John 13:3-5

C. Who is our model for spiritual leadership?

- a. In our own lives?
- b. Jesus as the ultimate model
- c. Introduction to the Christ Hymn – Philippians 2:4

Break for dinner

Session 2: *Kenosis* of Jesus

- A. Introduction to Philippians – 5 minutes
  - a. Background and History
  - b. The Church
  - c. The situation of the letter
- B. Honor and Shame in Philippi
  - a. *Cursus honorum* in the city
    - i. The pursuit of honor
    - ii. Leadership was about perception and power, not about humility and service
    - iii. This is what it meant to be a leader in Philippi
- C. Christ hymn as the antithesis
  - a. Paul, instead, calls them to an imitation of Jesus, who pursued a *cursus pudorum*
  - b. **Philippians 2:5-8**
- D. Kenosis
  - a. Discussion of the term and its use in Paul, Greco-Roman literature, etc.
  - b. How is Jesus emptying himself here?
    - i. Not of divinity/deity
    - ii. Not of power
    - iii. Jesus is emptying himself *because* he is God, and *in spite of the fact* that the Romans would see humility as the antithesis of deity
  - c. God is *kenotic*
    - i. Character of God
    - ii. God's justice, mercy, love are all part of his kenotic character
    - iii. Gorman and the *cruciformity* of God
- E. *Kenosis* as counterintuitive leadership
  - a. In two groups, discuss how this fits into our understanding of spiritual leadership from Session 1.
- F. Spiritual discipline: **Breath Prayer/Jesus Prayer**

**Saturday Morning:**

Breakfast – 8:30 AM

Worship – 10 minutes

Prayer – 3-5 minutes

Lectio Divina – *Philippians 2:5-11*

Session 3: “Having the Same *Phronein*”

- A. Discuss their *lectio* insights.
  - a. What struck you from the passage?
  - b. What did you hear differently?
- B. 2:5 – “Have this same *phronein* among yourselves as was in Christ Jesus...”
  - a. What attitudes do we see displayed in Jesus in this text?
  - b. How are they an appropriate ethic for Christians?
- C. *Phronesis* serves as the foundation for the book of Philippians.
  - a. The word is used twenty-three times in the Pauline corpus; ten of those occurrences are found in Philippians
  - b. Philippians 1:27 as the *propositio* of Paul’s argument – “to walk worthily”
    - i. 3:15 is the goal of the Christian life and the implementation of a Christian *phronesis*
    - ii. 4:2 – Euodia and Syntyche as leaders in the church that are not displaying this attitude; Paul calls them to have the same *phronesis*
  - c. Philippians 2:1-4 as a Christian *phronesis* that all Christians should aspire to.
- D. *Phronesis* and *Kenosis* as Spiritual Leadership
  - a. Philippians 2:5 and Christ as the model
  - b. Cruciformity is the lifestyle of a leader
- E. A church in need of *phronetic* leadership

Break

Session 4: *Kenosis* as *Theosis* – Spiritual Formation and Leadership

- A. What is the purpose of the spiritual life?
  - a. Brainstorm and share
- B. Starting with the End in Mind:
  - a. Christian *phronesis* points ahead towards a goal: to become more like Christ
    - i. Information here from Reed, Villafañe, and others
  - b. Philippians 1:27 as that “end goal”
- C. Kenotic lifestyle
  - a. Paul’s examples of the *kenotic* lifestyle:
    - i. Timothy
    - ii. Epaphroditus
    - iii. Paul himself
    - iv. Jesus

- b. In what ways do they demonstrate this *phronesis*? **Emptying themselves for the sake of the Kingdom**
- D. In what ways might we need to empty ourselves?

#### Break for Spiritual Discipline: **Ignatian Examen**

- E. *Theosis*: Becoming more like Christ
  - a. Paul seems serious that we are to develop the same *phronein* as Christ. But how are we to do this?
  - b. What attributes?
    - i. Humility
    - ii. Cruciformity
    - iii. Service
    - iv. Obedience to God
    - v. Etc.
  - c. How do we develop these disciplines?
  - d. *Theosis* patterned on the *kenosis* of Jesus.
- F. Definition of *theosis*
  - a. Reflection on verses like Hebrews 10:14; 2 Peter 1:4; etc. God is in the process of making us like himself.
  - b. Gorman's views of *theosis*
- G. *Kenosis*, *Theosis*, and *Phronesis*
  - a. Thus, Paul demonstrates that cruciformity, spiritual formation, and leadership are indelibly intertwined. A leader can only lead to the same degree that she/he is conformed to the image of Christ.
  - b. Seidel contends that leadership and spiritual formation are symbiotic in nature: a spiritual leader can only help transform the congregation if they, themselves, are undergoing spiritual formation.
- H. Spiritual practices for *theosis*
  - a. Rich tradition/heritage throughout the centuries
  - b. What spiritual practices/disciplines do you know?
  - c. Presentation of others:
    - i. Based around Foster's divisions: Inward, Outward, and Corporate<sup>1</sup>

#### Prayer in Small Groups

#### Break for Lunch

- Elders and deacons invited

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1. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*.

Session 5: Developing this *Phronesis*

- A. Have the CDT summarize the theology of the retreat:
  - a. Spiritual leadership
  - b. Jesus as the pattern for leadership
  - c. *Kenosis*, *phronesis*, and spiritual formation
- B. How might we need to grow spiritually to be the spiritual leaders God needs us to be?
  - a. Group discussion
  - b. Brainstorm on the board
  - c. Have a Secretary take notes

Pray together with the leaders

Pass out homework:

- Lectio divina over Philippians 2:1-11 in various translations (NIV, ESV, Message, etc.)
- Readings about spiritual formation from Greenman, Foster, and Beeley
- Theology chapter from the thesis

APPENDIX C

RESEARCHER FIELD NOTE FORM

<b><u>Observations:</u></b>	<b><u>Analysis:</u></b>
<p><i>Non-verbal Cues:</i> (Tone of voice, posture, seating, etc.)</p>	
<p><i>Participation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is speaking? Who is remaining silent or not engaging?</li> </ul>	

<p><i>Spiritual Discipline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Participation?</li><li>- What was said? How well did participants think it fit?</li><li>- How did it seem to go?</li></ul>	
<p><i>Participants' Comments:</i></p>	<p>Example Thoughts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What was said? What was not said?</li><li>- How well did the theme connect with the group?</li></ul>

APPENDIX D  
CODING GUIDELINES

<b>Key Coding Terms:</b>	<b>Similar terminology:</b>
1. Spiritual Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Leading</li> <li>b. Guiding</li> <li>c. Discipleship</li> <li>d. Following</li> <li>e. Serving (overlap with <i>kenosis</i>)</li> <li>f. Mission</li> <li>g. Dreaming</li> <li>h. Facilitate</li> </ul>
2. <i>Kenosis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Emptying</li> <li>b. Humility</li> <li>c. Service</li> <li>d. Image</li> <li>e. Cruciformity</li> <li>f. Cross</li> <li>g. Sacrifice</li> <li>h. Less</li> </ul>
3. <i>Phronesis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wisdom</li> <li>b. Attitude</li> <li>c. Action, Behavior</li> <li>d. Thinking</li> <li>e. Pattern/Shape</li> <li>f. Obey/obedience</li> <li>g. Etc.</li> </ul>
4. Spiritual Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Disciplines</li> <li>b. Growth</li> <li>c. Deepening</li> <li>d. Formed</li> <li>e. Formation</li> <li>f. Changing/Transforming</li> <li>g. Etc.</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX E

### FINAL SESSION – PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Imagine that a small group of individuals from the congregation work through this curriculum together over the course of ten weeks. How would their understanding of spiritual formation and spiritual leadership change through this study? What changes would we observe in their spiritual lives and in their leadership within the congregation?

Write your responses below. We will also share our thoughts with the group.

## APPENDIX F

### CURRICULUM – LEADER’S GUIDE

Dear Group Leader,

We are thankful for your willingness to serve as the facilitator for this group! We pray that you and your group members are blessed by this experience together. One of the greatest needs facing congregations is for deeper spiritual leaders. Leadership isn’t about making decisions, setting agendas, creating and keeping budgets, or many of the other tasks that are assigned to leaders. Those things are not bad, but they also aren’t the heart and soul of spiritual leadership. Instead, spiritual leaders are those who are becoming more like Christ in their own lives and helping others do the same. Everything else we do is secondary to the mission of following Christ ourselves and helping others follow Christ.

This curriculum seeks to help develop spiritual leaders for congregations. This curriculum can be used in a variety of ways: as a Bible class curriculum, as small group material, helping raise up new leaders, etc. Ideally, however, this curriculum will work best with *existing* leaders of the congregation who want/need to develop into deeper *spiritual* leadership. There are many who enter positions of leadership and, over time, feel drained by the needs of the congregation and the duties of the position. As they face these ongoing challenges, they need to develop a deeper connection with God in order to sustain their leadership.

Spiritual leadership isn’t about making decisions, however. That might be part of the task, but it isn’t the whole task. Instead, we want to redefine spiritual leadership as becoming more like Christ in our own lives and helping others do the same. Spiritual leadership requires an investment of ourselves: an investment in our own spiritual lives, and an investment in other people.

In essence, what we are asking you to do is be a spiritual leader and serve as a model of spiritual leadership. As you lead this group, you are drawing closer to God and helping others do the same. You are helping model a life that looks like Christ, and you are facilitating an experience in which the group will grow to look more like Christ. That will come with some joy and fear, excitement and tension. These upcoming sessions are meant to inspire, teach, and encourage. They will also be uncomfortable and challenging at times as we look internally and externally, asking important questions of ourselves, God, and others. All of those feelings are ok! Transformation can be both a wonderful and difficult experience. Simply trust that God is at work.

This curriculum is based on Paul's letter to the Philippians. Specifically, we are considering what it means as leaders to have "the same *mindset* as Christ Jesus" (2:5). We want to become more like Christ in the way we live and lead. This curriculum is based on different parts: Bible study, group interaction, and daily spiritual practices. Each piece is vital to the process of spiritual leadership development. Through the spiritual practices these leaders will draw closer to God and learn more about themselves. Through the Bible study they will be transformed by God's word. And through the group interaction they will be challenged, encouraged, and strengthened in this process.

As the group leader, your job is to invest in these individuals. Pray for them, encourage them, check up on them, ask difficult questions of them, and hold them accountable. Also, be open with them and learn from them. It is possible that, as group leader, you have already done this curriculum as a participant. You will learn new things as the facilitator; you will also learn new things from each person's perspectives, experiences, and interactions with the text.

On the pages that follow you will find a guide to help you manage the group sessions. Each session is based around sharing our experiences, digging into God's word together, and practicing spiritual disciplines together. You will help facilitate these discussions, as well as demonstrating how to do the spiritual practices each week. As a result, it requires you to dig into the lessons before each session. Your preparation will have a direct impact on how well these sessions go. Simply allow God to work on you through this material, and trust that God is working on those in this group.

We pray that you are blessed by this experience. Know that we believe that God has put you here as a leader to help other leaders mature and develop. Your congregation will be enriched by this experience, and we believe you will see God do great things through this study and its integration into the life of your church. May God get all of the glory in this process!

## **Session Outline**

Each session is designed to last between an hour and an hour and a half. This will depend on the size of your small group, the group's interaction, and the practices that you do throughout the week.

The general session outlines are as follows:

### **Welcome**

- Spend a few minutes summarizing the lessons to this point. What have you learned so far? Perhaps ask one of the group members to do this summary.
- Reiterate the definitions of spiritual leadership and *phronesis* as needed by your group.

### **Spiritual Discipline Discussion**

- How did the spiritual discipline(s) go this week?
- Ask questions about the practices:
  - o What did you learn about yourself? About God? About others?
  - o What did you find beneficial? What did you find challenging?
  - o What might God be teaching you through this practice?
  - o Did you find this practice beneficial? Why or why not?
  - o Etc.
- Ascertain who *didn't* participate in the spiritual practices
  - o Ask them why
  - o Hold one another accountable in a loving way
  - o The spiritual practices, however, will be what help transform us through this curriculum. They are an integral part of the learning that takes place.

### **Lesson**

- Work through the lesson together.
- If needed, you are welcome to have your group work on the lesson throughout the week and come prepared for the discussion.
- The group interaction, however, is a vital part of the process. This exchange of ideas will lead to deeper insights and clearer understanding as they share their ideas and perspectives.
- Try to work through each question within the group. At times there might be a "simplistic" question, but it hopefully sets a foundation for the next question for discussion. The questions are geared to lead into the next and achieve the purpose of each session.

### **Spiritual Practice Introduction**

- At the end of each session we want to introduce the practice or practices for the next week.
- If warranted, demonstrate these practices together. Read the introductions to the practices where it is helpful (i.e. palms up/palms down, Lectio Divina, Examen, etc.)
- Do these practices together and then encourage them to practice them on their own

### **Close in prayer or worship**

It would also be great to involve the group members in these processes. Have them lead the spiritual discipline introduction. Ask one of them to handle some of the questions. Have them do the spiritual discipline summary at the start of each session, looking back at how these practices have shaped us. One of the goals is to develop their leadership abilities; asking them to lead is an appropriate part of that process.

Additionally, each member has a covenant that they will sign as part of this curriculum. (A sample is provided on the next page.) The last point in the covenant asks them to consider serving as a group leader for this curriculum in the future. Allowing them to participate in leadership is a great way to prepare them for this possibility.

We are asking you to sign a leader covenant as well as a member covenant. The Leader Covenant is as follows:

### **GROUP LEADER'S COVENANT**

In order to best help my group grow and develop to be more like Christ, I commit myself to the following principles:

1. I will work to deepen my own spiritual relationship with God through reading, prayer, and spiritual practices.
2. I will pray for these group members, lifting them up to God and praying for their hearts and lives.
3. I will prepare weekly for the upcoming sessions in order to best facilitate this experience.
4. I will foster an atmosphere of openness, honesty, and confidentiality within the group.
5. I will hold the group members accountable throughout this curriculum.
6. I will encourage the participants to take leadership initiative throughout the course of this curriculum.

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(Signed)

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(Date)

A LEADER'S COVENANT

In order to mature in my spiritual life and leadership, I commit myself to the following principles:

1. I will meet weekly with my group for the following ten weeks.
2. I will complete all practices before the group meets together again. When I fall short, I will acknowledge this to my group and learn from that experience.
3. I will seek to be vulnerable to God and to one another through this process.
4. I will seek to let God transform me through this process. I know that might be uncomfortable and difficult, but that it will ultimately be rewarding and refreshing.
5. I will contribute to the group in sharing, reflecting, leading, and learning. I will commit to maintaining honesty and confidentiality as we share together.
6. I will encourage my fellow group members through prayer and edification.

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(Signed)

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(Date)

## **Session 1 – Leadership**

***Purpose:*** To introduce leaders to a new paradigm in leadership: spiritual leadership is about becoming more like Christ and helping others do the same, moving towards God's goal for us.

### **Questions:**

In your opinion, what makes someone a strong, effective leader?

When you think about a strong leader, who comes to mind and why?

The literature on leadership is vast and varied. While many of the principles are the same across the spectrum, there are varying definitions of leadership that emerge from the realms of politics, business, education, and religion, among others. In addition, leadership is often dependent upon the culture and context of the organization in question. What constitutes effective leadership in Japan might stand in direct contrast to leadership prerogatives in the United States. Leadership, by its very implementation, is contextual.

Additionally, each individual has her/his own opinions about what constitutes effective leadership. These are based on past experiences, individual preferences, and the needs of the organizations of which they have been a part. Thus, while some of our beliefs about leadership might overlap, each of us has our own unique take on effective leadership.

Here are some different definitions of leadership found throughout the literature. I am going to read them to you, and I want you to write down words or phrases that impact you about leadership. These can be from the definitions themselves *or* from your own perspectives as you hear the definitions.

- John Maxwell: "Leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less."
- Kevin Kruse: "Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kevin Kruse, "What is Leadership?" *Forbes* April 9, 2013. Available electronically at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/>. Last accessed October 26, 2015.

- Eric Michel: “Leadership is *the art of empowering and mobilizing others to want to accomplish a mutually agreed-upon goal while advancing the group’s integrity and morale.*”<sup>2</sup>
- Sheryl Sandberg: “Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.”
- US Army: “Leadership is influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”<sup>3</sup>
- Walt Wright: “Leadership is a relationship of influence in which one person seeks to influence the vision, the values, the attitudes, and the behaviors of another.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Questions for Reflection**

Which of these definitions most impacts you? Why?

What do these various definitions have in common?

What are the strengths of these definitions? What are their weaknesses?

### **Models of Leadership**

Often, leadership is presented in one of two models. The first is the Pyramid Model, a top down approach in which the leader directs those under him/her, and those individuals manage and direct those underneath them, etc., until the lowest strata of the organization.

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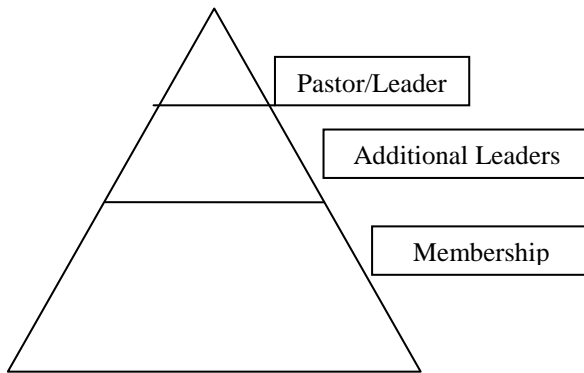
2. <https://harvardleadership.wordpress.com/2011/11/18/defining-leadership/>

3. US Army Leadership Manual, available online at [http://www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/r600\\_100.pdf](http://www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/r600_100.pdf).

4. Walt Wright, “Introduction: Mentor to Mentor,” in *The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders*, edited by Eric O Jacobsen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 3.



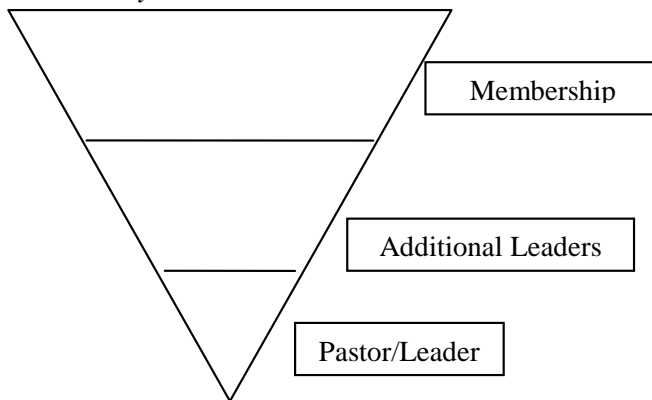
### *Pyramid Model*



In the pyramid model, the leader is supported by those beneath her/him, and the leader manages those who are underneath them in the organizational structure.

The second model is the inverse of the first. This model is the Inverted Pyramid, and it sees the leader as a servant that serves and supports those whom he/she guides. This continues from each level to the next in the organization.

### *Inverted Pyramid Model*



Robert Greenleaf calls this the **servant leader** model. He says, “The servant-leader *is* **servant first**... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to **lead**...”

Which of these two models do you appreciate more? Why?

In what situations would one model be better than the other?

What is missing from these models?

All of these definitions and models can be used to define leadership in a variety of arenas, from politics to education to business.

*Yet it also makes us wonder... What is the difference between SECULAR LEADERSHIP and SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP?*

### **Spiritual Leadership**

What are the characteristics that make someone a strong, spiritual leader?

- *Get their opinions*

When you think about a strong, spiritual leader, who comes to mind and why?

- *Allow them to share. If it is someone from their own life (i.e. not a “celebrity” or well-known figure), ask them about their relationship. What do they recognize about this personal that makes them spiritual?*
- *Who is your ideal?*

### **Secular Leadership vs. Spiritual Leadership**

Richard Mayhue contends that there is a difference between strong natural leaders and strong spiritual leaders. Strong Natural Leaders (SNL) are those who have leadership qualities that are innate in their character and makeup. Strong Spiritual Leaders (SSL) are those who develop into leaders over time.

Mayhue’s characteristics:

Strong, Natural Leaders

1. Highly motivated
2. Externally pleasing
3. Knowledgeable
4. Available

What are the benefits of this list?

What are the dangers?

*Those characteristics can be a phenomenal blueprint for success and leadership. They can also lead towards leaders like Hitler, Stalin, and others.*

What is inherently Christian about *Christian leadership*? What makes someone a good, effective, spiritual leader?

Mayhue contends that spiritual leaders display these four S characteristics:

1. Sufficient (able, gifted, capable)
2. Submitted to God -- “The internal quality of fearing God must be teamed with an outward submission.”
3. Spiritual
4. Steadfast

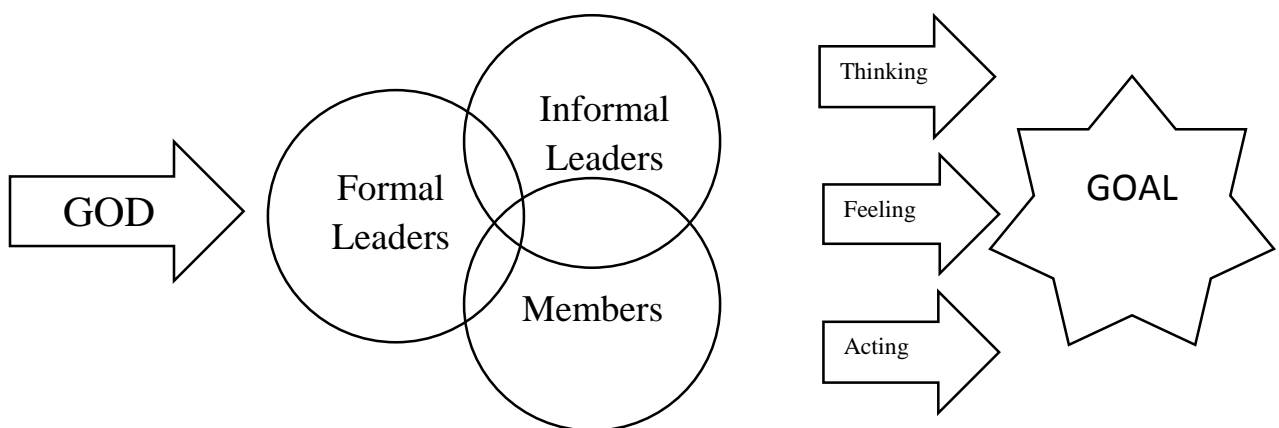
Too often we focus on the idea of **leadership** without taking into account the call for **spirituality**.

### **Third Model of Leadership**

While the other two models are helpful in understanding leadership from a secular point of view, they are missing two necessary ingredients: **spiritual formation** and an **end goal**.

The third model works with a goal in mind:

### ***Spiritual Leadership Model***



What strikes you from this image? How is this image different than the other two illustrations?

*Thus, spiritual leadership is a process of being conformed to the likeness of Christ. Then one can foster a relationship of influence in which the leader can help others be conformed to the likeness of Christ.*

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul summarizes his main purpose in Phil. 2:5 – “Have this same **mindset** in yourselves as was in Christ Jesus.”

- *Ask for the various translations that they have. Some words will include: attitude, thinking, frame of reference, lifestyle, etc. **This is one of the major components of this curriculum; we will return to this idea in future lessons.***
- What does this verse mean to you?

How does one develop the mindset/attitude of Christ?

- *Through the process of **spiritual formation**.*

What does spiritual formation mean to you?

Spiritual formation is “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”<sup>5</sup>

*What strikes you about that definition? What is emphasized by this definition? Do you agree or disagree with Greenman’s definition?*

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The goal of this curriculum is to help you develop in three main areas of your life:

- Your Christian lifestyle

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5. Jeffrey P. Greenman, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective: Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 24.

- Your spirituality and spiritual life
- Your leadership potential

Many of us don't see ourselves as leaders. Leaders are other people, those with positions of power, authority, or influence. Or we doubt that we were born with the necessary gifts and skills that are needed to be effective leaders.

But leadership is about **influence** more than power. And a person who is being conformed to the likeness of Christ, developing a Christian lifestyle and mindset, will have incredible influence on those around them. Thus, everyone has the **potential** to be a **spiritual leader** in some facet of their lives.

The goal, then, is for each of us to develop into the spiritual leaders that God wants us to be. This will look different for each individual that participates.

How do you want to grow and develop over the course of this class?

- In the area of Christian lifestyle, I hope to...
- In my spiritual life, I hope to...
- In my leadership, I hope to...

**Have them share these goals with one another.**

### **Spiritual Discipline Exercise:**

Lectio divina

- You can also call this "Dwelling in the Word/Dwelling in the World"
- Read the explanation together (which is included on the following pages.) The individual *lectios* are not located in this Leader's Guide, but can be found in Participant's Guide.

## **Explanation of *Lectio Divina***

Scripture is one of the best ways to understand the heart and mindset of God. The author of Psalm 119 extolled the virtues of the Bible, referring to it as “a lamp for my feet and a light to my path.” The author of Hebrews talked about the way that Scripture teaches, challenges, and convicts us; she/he writes that God’s word is “living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). When we reflect on Scripture, we allow God’s word to challenge and transform us. We learn new things about God, the Bible, and ourselves that we might not have discovered before.

*Lectio divina* is a Latin phrase that means “divine reading.” It is an age-old practice that takes the roles of Scripture and the Holy Spirit very seriously. It allows us to read Scripture and, at the same time, allows Scripture to read us. *Lectio divina* believes that Scripture still speaks to our lives today and connects to our current context. God teaches us as our hearts and minds connect the message to the situations of our lives. The goal isn’t just to discover what the Scripture says, but also how we might apply this Scripture to our lives.

This process goes by many different names: Dwelling in the Word, Dwelling in the World; Praying with Scripture; etc. Whatever name you choose, the process is similar as we dwell within the text, allowing it to change our hearts, minds, and actions.

The steps of *lectio divina* are listed below.

### **Steps of *Lectio Divina***

1. *Silencio*
  - Practice silence with the Lord. Come into God’s presence, slow down, relax, and intentionally release the chaos and noise in your mind to him
2. *Lectio*
  - Read the passage slowly, whether silently or out loud.
  - When a word or phrases catches your attention, stop and attend to what God is saying through this phrase.
  - Don’t feel that you have to rush through the experience. Take your time and savor each word or phrase that impacts you.
3. *Meditatio*
  - Read the Scripture a second time.

- Reflect on the importance of any part that seems significant to you.
- Ponder these words in your heart

4. *Oratio*

- Pray these Scriptures, with the following thoughts in mind.
- What feelings/emotions has the text brought up in you?
- Where are some areas that make you uncomfortable in the text?
- What might God be trying to teach you about your life right now through these words, phrases, or ideas?

5. *Contemplatio*

- Contemplate, rest, and listen to God.
- Allow some time for the word to sink deeply into your soul.

Another way to summarize these steps is...

1. *Remember...* moments with God
2. *Read...* the passage
3. *Reflect...* on its message and what it is saying to you
4. *Rest...* in the message, letting it sink into your heart, mind, and soul

We believe that God's word is "living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). If this is true, then God's word, when it dwells in our minds for a time, will bring us to greater clarity and understanding. God still speaks to us through his word.

## **Lectio Divina, Day 1 – Philippians 1:3-11**

**1** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

**2** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**3** I thank my God every time I remember you. **4** In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **6** being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

**7** It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. **8** God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

**9** And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

### **Questions:**

1. What words or phrases from this passage impacted you? Why do you think that is?
  
2. What does this passage teach us about leadership? How does Paul understand leadership?
  
3. What do the words of Paul's prayer mean? How is this an important lifestyle for a leader? For an average Christian?



## **Lectio Divina, Day 2 – Mark 10:42-45**

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over the. Not so with you, instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

1. What words did you respond to as you read through this text? What was your emotion associated with this text?
  
2. How do these verses apply to your life today?
  
3. What struck you about Jesus's comparison of the two types of leaders?
  
4. What does the idea of "being a servant" mean to you?
  
5. Who did you see today that was being a servant? Who was a good example that you encountered today?

### **Lectio Divina, Day 3 – John 13:1-5, 12-17**

<sup>1</sup>It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup>The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup>so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup>After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him...

**12** When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

1. What words or phrases stand out to you from this passage? Why?
2. What do you think God might want you to learn from this passage?
3. What does Jesus say about leadership and power in this passage?
4. In what ways are you challenged by Jesus's actions and message?

## **Lectio Divina, Day 4 – Ephesians 4:11-16**

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1. Paul emphasizes “Christ” numerous times throughout this passage. How does Paul use Christ’s actions/example in this passage?
  
2. What does this passage say to you about spiritual leadership?
  
3. Internalize this passage: *What strikes you personally about this passage? Are there parts of this you do well? Parts you struggle with? Things you disagree with? Something new that struck you? Reflect on that for a moment...*
  
4. What is the goal of spiritual leadership? Based on Paul’s words here, how would you define success?
  
5. What do you think God wants you to learn from this passage?

## **Lectio Divina, Day 5 – Philippians 2:19-30**

*The next two days we will read some of the biographical sections of Philippians. Imagine the lives of the people who are involved in this text. Think about their example(s) of spiritual leadership in ways that you might hope to emulate.*

<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. <sup>24</sup> And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

<sup>25</sup> But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. <sup>26</sup> For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. <sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. <sup>29</sup> So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, <sup>30</sup> because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

1. What struck you from this text? Why do you think that is?
2. Why do you think Paul offers these two men as examples of faithful leadership?
3. Which of these two individuals do you identify with more? Why?
4. If someone were to describe you as a spiritual leader, what might they say about your life and leadership?

## **Lectio Divina, Day 6 – Philippians 3:7-15**

<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

1. What strikes you from this text? What do you think God wants to teach you through this text?
2. Is there anything in your own life that you value more than your faith? How do you know?
3. What might you have to give up (“consider a loss”) in order to better follow Christ?
4. What does spiritual maturity mean to you? How are you helping yourself mature?
5. Can you confidently state as Paul does: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” Why or why not?

## **Session 2 – Citizens of the Gospel**

***Purpose: At the end of this session, we want leaders to realize that God calls them to a citizenship in the Kingdom that trumps all other allegiances. This type of leader seeks to put God first in all things.***

How would you summarize the Gospel of Christ?

***Participants should touch on aspects of incarnation, death, burial, resurrection; salvation from sins; becoming more like God; hope for the future; etc.***

The Greek word for “gospel” (*euangelion*) literally means “good news.” How is the gospel of Christ good news for you and for the world?

***This should touch on salvation from sins and becoming more like Christ in our lives.***

***In the curriculum, the participants are writing out the text of Philippians 1:27. Follow up with this statement:***

In Philippians 1:27, Paul writes this admonition to the Christians in Philippi: “*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...*”

New Testament scholar James Thompson believes that Philippians 1:27 is Paul’s *propositio*, or main thesis, of his argument. ***How might this function as the main thesis for the book of Philippians?*** For Thompson, our understanding of the entire letter revolves around our comprehension of Paul’s message in this short verse.

1. How can one live a life “worthy of the Gospel?” What does that look like in someone’s life?
2. Why would this be an integral part of the Christian lifestyle?

**Read Philippians 1:27-30.**

3. What does Paul say in these verses?
4. Do you think that v. 28-30 are an explanation of “conduct worthy of the gospel”? Why or why not?
5. Why would unity be an important part of the gospel lifestyle?

Paul is trying to illustrate for the Philippians what the Gospel lifestyle would look like generally, while also sparking their imagination for how it might play out in their own lives, ministries, and relationships.

One of the most intriguing things about this text is a question of translation. Translating from one language to another is always difficult, because languages do not correspond directly with a word in one language directly equating with one word in another. Translators and scholars have struggled to put Paul's main thought into English in such a way that it makes sense for modern ears. Some approximate Paul's meaning, giving the gist of his argument. Others translate the text as closely as possible while also knowing that this will cause some readers to not completely understand the implications of Paul's message.

***Here are some of the ways that this verse is translated in various Bibles and commentaries: (Have them write down words or phrases that stand out to them.)***

- "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ..." (NIV)
- "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ..." (ESV)
- "Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ..." (NLT)
- "Now, the most important thing is this: as citizens of heaven live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ..." (O'Brien)<sup>6</sup>

***What do they notice about all of these different translations? They all say very different things.***

***Why do you think the translations are so different from one another?***

The word that becomes difficult is the Greek word πολιτεύεσθε (*politeusthe*), a word that is associated with the rights and privileges of "citizenship."

How does the word "citizenship" change or nuance the meaning of Paul's text here?

I want you to think about your "citizenship" for a moment. What country are you a citizen of? \_\_\_\_\_.

- What does it mean to you to be a citizen of your home country?

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6. O'Brien, 144.

- Think of a time in your own life in which your citizenship was important to you (i.e., while traveling abroad, serving in the military, feeling patriotic, etc.) What was the situation? How did it make you feel?
- What are the \_\_\_\_\_ of our citizenship? (**The blank should be left blank; the phrases are supplied by the chart below**)

Rights and Privileges?	Responsibilities and Duties?	Liabilities?

From the Facilitator: Roman Citizenship and Philippi<sup>7</sup>

Philippi had been granted status as a *ius Italicum*, where Roman laws and customs ruled and citizens of the city were granted Roman citizenship as well. This status was granted because of two battles fought under Augustus that took place in the area. After those battles, Augustus allowed veteran legionnaires to take land and settle in the area of Philippi. He also granted Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of the area, and the area was reorganized as a miniature Rome, controlled by Roman law, and governed by two *duumviri*, military officers placed in charge of the city.

Those in Philippi prided themselves on their Roman citizenship, but not everyone was made a citizen when Philippi was granted this status. Only those who were veterans of

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7. Much of this information is derived from a seminal work by Joseph Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).



the military, as well as those in positions of civic power or those who had aided Augustus in his battles, were granted citizenship. The original inhabitants were forced to give up their land and property to make way for veterans, thus flooding the city with urban poor. Thus, those who had citizenship also had wealth, power, influence, and prestige. Those who were not citizens did not have the ability to influence society nor change their status. There was an incredible separation between these classes of people. From funerary inscriptions in the city, scholar Joseph Hellerman has determined that the distinction between citizens and non-citizens was important and sharp in Philippian society.

Honor was the key virtue in the city of Philippi, with the pursuit of glory, honor, and prestige as one of the most important facets of Roman culture. Because Philippi was reestablished as a Roman colony and was based upon Roman social customs, it would have a similar mindset in regards to honor and glory. The Roman world was a two class society made up of wealthy, landed elites that controlled the government and resources, and everybody else (non-elites, freedmen, and slaves).<sup>8</sup> Hellerman demonstrates through archaeological discoveries that “elite males in Roman society engaged in a relentless quest for the acquisition of personal and familial honor.”<sup>9</sup>

The Philippian elite, like everyone in the Roman Empire, competed in the *cursus honorum*, the “Honors Race,” a progression of governmental positions through which one progressed by good works, monetary donations, public works projects, patronage, and sponsorship of games. These positions were also limited in the number who could hold and office for a given time and the length that a person could occupy that position. Leadership was solely based on perception, with those perceived as having the greatest honor and status being promoted to higher levels of leadership and power.<sup>10</sup>

This quest for honor was not just reserved for the highest strata of society but was also the social game in which the lower classes, freedmen, and even slaves, competed.<sup>11</sup> Among the non-elite in Philippian society social position was achieved particularly through donations to voluntary associations and religious cults. Honor was a “public commodity” that was based on one’s perception towards others in society, and all aspects of life were directed towards the gaining and keeping of honor. Thus, the city was a collection of public projects, sponsored monuments, and philanthropic works dedicated towards the retention of prestige.

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8. Hellerman, 6. Hellerman states that the elite made up approximately two percent of the population, while the rest came from the other social strata.

9. Ibid., 111. Hellerman demonstrates through inscriptions, dedications, and tombstones discovered throughout the site of Philippi that individuals lauded their achievements and donations to one another

10. Ibid, 51ff.

11. Ibid., 88-109.

But in verse 27 Paul uses a very politically charged word: πολιτεύεσθε. Paul is calling them to a citizenship that trumps all: citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Their lives were meant to be a reflection of that which they believed. To Paul, the core concept of the spiritual life is to live in accordance to the Gospel narrative and the example of Christ.

Why were the Philippians so proud of their citizenship?

***They see themselves as important. Those who had both Roman and city citizenship would have had positions of power and authority. All of the right doors would be open to them. They were seen as a privileged class of people, more important than anyone else. This would often lead to pride and arrogance.***

How might this pride in their Roman citizenship, and everything that went with it, become a detriment to their faith?

- ***This pride and arrogance would damage their relationships with one another. They might begin to look down on others in the church who WEREN'T citizens.***
- ***The pursuit of honor would have stood in direct contrast with the tenets of the Gospel.***
- ***Constant “one-upmanship” would negatively influence the unity of the church.***
- ***Leadership in the church would be about who had the greatest status and honor, not about who was most gifted or spiritual.***
- ***Only those with “honor” (i.e. wealth, authority, power) would be allowed to lead in the church.***

### **Read Philippians 3:17-21.**

Through his words in 1:27-30 and 3:17-21, Paul outlines the difference between citizenship in the world and citizenship in heaven. According to Paul, how do these two citizenships contrast one another?

Citizenship in the World (Earthly Mind)	Citizenship in Heaven (Heavenly mind)
Enemies of the cross of Christ (3:18)	Worthy of the Gospel (1:27)
Destiny is destruction (3:19)	Standing firm in the Spirit (1:28)
Controlled by their passions (3:19)	Striving together without fear (1:27-28)
Living in shame (3:19)	Saved by God (1:28)

Mind set on earthly things (3:19)	Not always easy (1:29-30)
	Hope comes from Jesus's return (3:20)
	Transformation to be like Jesus (3:21)
<i>Other thoughts?</i>	<i>Other thoughts?</i>

How does one become a “citizen of heaven”?

### ***Moment of Self-Reflection***

In your own life, which citizenship is most important? If push came to shove, to which one would you pledge your allegiance?

- ***Another way of asking this might be, “Are you an American-Christian (a Christian who happens to live in America) or a Christian-American (a person who values their patriotism over the Gospel)?***

How do you know?

Why is it important for a spiritual leader to have his/her “citizenship” figured out in his/her own mind?

How can leaders begin working on “living as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ”?  
***This should touch on aspects of changing their relationships with one another; drawing closer to God; practicing humility; etc.***

### ***Spiritual Practice:***

Ignatian Examen

## Spiritual Practice – Ignatian *Examen*

In his book *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola outlines a spiritual practice called *Examen*. Ignatius wanted his fellow monks to practice a form of self-reflection each day so that they could understand their own hearts and motivations better. These practices would also allow the practitioner to look for ways in which God was present in her/his own life at various points throughout the day.

Specifically, Ignatius describes two forms of examination: a *particular examination of conscience* and a *general examination of conscience*. Each plays an important role in Ignatian spirituality, specifically in the discernment of the spirits and the resolution to be transformed by God.

In the particular examination, Ignatius calls those who are participating in the *Exercises* to examine their hearts twice a day in order to discern the presence of God. When you arise in the morning, you are to pray about the one particular sin or fault that you want to overcome that day. Each time you sin you are recognize that sin when you commit it during the day and ask forgiveness for that sin. Twice a day (typically noon and supper) you are challenged to reflect on your day to this point, particularly in light of the sin that you resolved earlier in the day to correct. Each hour should be examined, and you should place a dot on the line for the number of times you fell into that sin. The same practice is repeated at supper, and then the subsequent day. Throughout the week the chart is consulted to see what progress is being made, and the goal is to have fewer dots as each day of the week progresses.<sup>12</sup> The ultimate goal is to “rid myself of [the sins] to the extent they hinder me.”<sup>13</sup>

The general examination of conscience is the second type of *Examen*. This is to help discern any particular sins or problems in our lives that we might need to confess to another.<sup>14</sup> Ignatius summarizes the general *Examen* in five points:

1. **Give thanks** to God for his benefits
2. **Ask grace** to know my own sins
3. **Ask an account** of the soul from the hour of my arising
4. **Ask pardon** for my faults.
5. **Resolve** to amend them, with God’s grace.

The *Examen* is then closed with prayer. Also, if any confession is warranted you are encouraged to seek out someone to whom you can confess your sins and need for forgiveness.

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12. Summarized from *Spiritual Exercises*, 24-32.

13. *Ibid.*, 23.

14. Ignatius attributes these sins to three factors: our own desires, good spirits, and evil spirits. These three war within our souls. See *Ibid.*, 32.

Each of us is going to practice the *general Examen* throughout this week. Twice a day we will spend a few moments with God, looking back over the course of the day and seeing the ways in which God is present (or absent) in our lives. While you are welcome to spend lengthy amounts of time in the *Examen*, typically one should aim for seven to ten minutes per session.

Each day has a guide for reflection, ways in which you can practice this discipline in a fresh way. Feel free to record your thoughts, emotions, and experiences after completing the *Examen*, whether here or in a separate journal. We will share about these experiences together next week.

### **Session 3 – The *Phronesis* of Christ**

***Purpose: By the end of this session participants should be able to define phronesis and state why it is important to understanding the letter of Philippians. They should also begin to understand that a phronesis based on Jesus’s example changes the way that leaders think about and interact with God, ourselves, and others.***

*To begin...*

Read these words from Philippians 2:5 – “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...”

- What does this verse mean to you? How do you understand it?  
***Try and have them make this personal for their own lives, not just a generic understanding of the words of the text.***  
***Maybe follow up with questions like, “In what relationship(s) is it easy to behave like Christ? In what relationship(s) is it difficult?”***
- What is the “mindset” of Christ? How do we see this same attitude in Jesus’s life?

**Share your insights with one another.**

*Background...*

The Greek word that is translated as “mindset” is the word *phronesis*. It is a word that is used twenty-three times in the Pauline corpus. **Ten** of those occurrences are found in the book of Philippians, making *phronesis* one of the pivotal ideas of the entire letter.

Throughout the New Testament, *phronesis* is translated in a number of different ways: mindset, attitude, mind, thinking, and wisdom, just to name a few.

Theologian Stephen Fowl defines *phronesis* as a pattern of **thinking**, **feeling**, and **acting**.

- Rewrite verse 5 below with this new definition in place of mindset:
  - o ***In your relationships with one another, have this same pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting as Christ Jesus...***
- How does that definition change our understanding of verse 5? ***This isn’t just about my thinking or my attitude; this Christlike phronesis is about every aspect of my being.***

How are we to have the “mindset” of Christ in our own lives?

Paul uses the term *phronesis* ten times in the book of Philippians: 1:7; 2:2 (twice); 3:19; 4:2; and 4:10 (twice). Each of these verses is listed below, in context, and the words used as translations for *phronesis* are written in **bold**. Let's read through them together:

***Maybe have each participant read at least one verse. Have them interact with the texts as they read them: highlighting key words or ideas, write thoughts in the margin, etc.***

**1:3-7** – “<sup>3</sup>I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me ***to feel this way*** about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.”

**2:1-3** – “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>complete my joy by being of the ***same mind***, having the same love, being in full accord and of ***one mind***. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

**2:5** – “Have this ***same mind/attitude*** among yourselves as was in Christ Jesus...”

**3:12-15** – “<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>15</sup>Let those of us who are mature ***think this way***, and if in anything you ***think*** otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.”

**3:17-19** – “<sup>17</sup>Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup>For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with ***minds*** set on earthly things.”

**4:2** – “<sup>2</sup>I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche ***to agree*** in the Lord.” (Literally “to have the same mind in the LORD.”)

**4:10** – “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your ***concern*** for me. You were indeed ***concerned*** for me, but you had no opportunity.”

Pick one of these verses and summarize how Paul uses the idea of *phronesis* in that section. What is Paul saying about their “pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting”?

As you have listened to one another’s interpretations of these verses, what stood out to you? What is the gist of Paul’s argument in these various verses?

***Paul is calling them to a distinctly Christian phronesis, a way of being that encompasses every aspect of their lives.***

The Philippians lived in the midst of a polytheistic, unaccepting culture. Their religion was viewed with distrust and antagonism because it wasn’t like the other religions in the Greco-Roman *world*.

- ***Greco-Roman religions accepted a plethora of deities, while Christianity said that only God (as Father, Son, and Spirit) was to be worshiped.***
- ***In the Roman Empire, being a good citizen meant worshiping the Emperor as a god. But Christians proclaimed that only Jesus Christ was Lord.***
- ***Many of these religions had various mysteries and rituals that went against Christian faith. They also practiced forms of magic and sorcery that stood opposed to God.***
- ***The worship of gods and goddesses didn’t just take place at temples and shrines. Instead, it pervaded across all sorts of areas of life: trade guilds, places to eat and assemble, shrines in the home, holidays and holy days, etc.***
- ***Christians would not worship the idols, assemble in the temples, eat food sacrificed to idols, join guilds associated with these deities, or worship the emperor. All of these things made them different from their surrounding culture.***

Although these Christians would have grown up in Philippi and the surrounding area, they were now seen as **outsiders** because of their faith.

Why would having a distinctly Christian *phronesis* be important in the midst of that situation?

***It would help them maintain a sense of identity in the midst of a polytheistic culture. A Christian phronesis would also teach them how to live out their faith in every aspect of their lives. Etc.***

In your opinion, what should a Christian *phronesis* look like? What would be the important actions and characteristics of a *phronesis* shaped like Christ?



***Get their thoughts. Possible answers might include showing love, offering hospitality, being with the marginalized, loving one's enemies, telling the Good News, practicing humility, etc.***

Paul himself defines what it means to have a Christian *phronesis* for the Christians in Philippi. Paul is speaking directly to the context and situations of these Christians, but we can also take his words to heart for ourselves. Read through **Philippians 2:1-4**. What are some of the characteristics that Paul mentions?

***Have them spend time with these verses. The questions below will help, but have them dig deeply as they think about this. Share from your own life to promote a sense of honesty and openness.***

Reflect on your own life for a moment:

- Are these qualities present in your own life? *Often that is difficult for us to judge for ourselves, so if this question is difficult for you consider answering a different question: Would your spouse/best friend say that these qualities were present in your own life?*
- Which of these qualities...
  - o Is easiest for you?
  - o Is most difficult?
- Why do you think that is?

Paul starts with the word “therefore.” He is referring back to the statement that he made right before this. Paul had been calling them to live their lives “as citizens (of heaven) worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” And he is reminding them of the markers of their citizenship: unity with Christ, comfort in his love, fellowship in the Spirit, tenderness and compassion for one another.

Here, Paul outlines a Christian *phronesis* or mindset. This stands in direct contrast to the earthly *phronesis* that Paul outlines in 3:

Earthly <i>Phronesis</i> : 3:17-19	Christian <i>Phronesis</i> : 2:1-4; 3:20-21
Enemies of the cross of Christ (3:18)	Worthy of the Gospel (1:27)
Destiny is destruction (3:19)	Standing firm in the Spirit (1:28)
Controlled by their passions (3:19)	Striving together without fear (1:27-28)
Living in shame (3:19)	Saved by God (1:28)
Mind set on earthly things (3:19)	Not always easy (1:29-30)
	Hope comes from Jesus's return (3:20)
	Transformation to be like Jesus (3:21)
<i>Other thoughts?</i>	<i>Other thoughts?</i>

Why would the earthly *phronesis* described in 3:17-19 be dangerous in leadership?

***Possible answers include: It becomes about what I can get out of my position of leadership: power, fame, wealth, satisfaction, etc. Leadership that is like this abuses others, seeks gain over all else, harms the church, brings shame on the community, maligns Christ, etc.***

In 2:3, Paul calls them to not live with “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit.” What do these terms mean to you?

***Vain conceit is defined below (with kenodoxa).***

How have you seen these qualities in both secular and spiritual leaders that you have encountered?

How is “selfish ambition” tied to our ideas of success?

- How would you define success...
  - o In life?
  - o In church?

The phrase “vain conceit” comes from a combination of two Greek words:

- *Keno* = **empty**
- *Doxa* = **glory**
- In the King James’ Version, this term is translated as **vainglory**.
- How are these things an attempt at achieving glory for ourselves?

At what point does “success” turn into the pursuit of vainglory (vain conceit)?

***This discussion of success in leadership is powerful. Take time to discuss what success means in the church and how/when success might be taken to an extreme.***

Consider the words from Philippians 2:5 once again: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...”

How does the *phronesis* of Christ change the way I think about...

- Success?
- Myself?
- Others?
- Leadership?

### **Spiritual Practices for the Week: Forms of Prayer**

palms up/palms down

Contemplation

## **Spiritual Practice – palms up/palms down**

palms up/palms down is a specific type of prayer that seeks to open one's self up to God. All of us have worries, concerns, guilt, or feelings that we bring when we pray. The normal concerns of life and the troubles of the day often sit on our hearts and minds when we pray. This can be exacerbated by difficult life events, struggles, pain, frustration, etc.

The goal through palms up/palms down prayer is simply to acknowledge all of those things before the LORD. You recognize that God is with you and hears the cries of your heart. And you release these things to him.

### **Steps:**

1. Sit comfortably in a relaxed position. Typically this is in a chair with both feet on the floor. Place your hands on your lap. Breathe deeply for a few moments, simply bringing yourself to relaxation and peace.
2. Remember the presence of God. It might help to think of Jesus sitting beside you, or God being right there with you. Sometimes focusing on a story (i.e. walking with Christ to Emmaus, sitting over a meal, etc.) to help be in his presence.
3. When you are ready, *turn your palms down* and let go of all of your worries, cares, frustrations and fears. Maybe visualize them falling from your hands, laying them at the feet of Jesus. You can even name them out loud if you wish.
4. When you have given your cares to God, *turn your palms up* on your knees. Imagine that God is filling your hands with his presence, peace, and love. What might God say to you at this moment? Listen
5. When you are ready, give thanks to God for all he has done.

Practice this at least three times throughout the week. It might be helpful to do this daily.

## **Spiritual Practice – Contemplation**

Too often we spend our lives rushed and harried. We run from one event to the next, and our time is filled with busyness. The daily grind of life often gets in the way of slowing or stopping, simply thinking about life and enjoying the experiences.

But experience teaches us nothing. It is only through reflection on our experiences that we can truly learn and grow. Adele Calhoun says that this is where contemplation comes into play, for it is through contemplation that we can truly enter into the moment with our eyes open, seeing these events with “faith, hope and love... seek[ing] God and the ‘meanings’ threaded through our days and years... A contemplative person recognizes that every experience offers more than meets the eye. They know that, bidden or unbidden, God is present” in the experiences of our life and can be discerned and found.<sup>15</sup>

In essence, contemplation invites us into the moment and reminds us to seek God. It leads us out of ourselves and into the reality of the presence of God.

There are many different ways to practice contemplation. Some are listed below:

### *Practicing the Presence of God*

This practice is inspired by the life of Brother Lawrence, a lay brother from a monastery in France. He sought to make every action and every moment, regardless of how mundane it was, to be a time to remember God’s presence. This is what he believed Paul meant when he said, “Pray unceasingly” (1 Thess. 5:19).

- Set a watch or timer for various times throughout the day. When the alarm beeps, take a moment to stop and think about God. Remind yourself that God is with you, that God loves you, and that God is always watching over you. Let that moment fill you with joy and energy for the time ahead.
- Stop at various points throughout the day and simply remember that God is with you.

### *Take a contemplative walk*

Go outside and simply walk around. Enjoy the breeze, the air, the sights that you see. You can do this in a park or around your neighborhood. Simply enjoy the people you see and the things you experience. Give thanks to God for those gifts.

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15. Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005), 49.

### *Contemplate an Experience*

Think back on an experience in your life. It could be one in which you felt the majesty of God. It could be a moment of joy or pain or sorrow. Anything you want to think about is fine.

- Place yourself in that experience
- Acknowledge any emotions that you feel
- Who else was involved in that moment with you? How did they experience it?
- What does this experience symbolize for you?

### *Contemplate a story from the Bible*

Pick a short story from the Bible. Often a story from the Gospels is helpful because it is already narrative in structure. But pick a story that matters to you.

- Read it slowly.
- Don't just read... Imagine. Imagine being in the story itself.
- Use your senses: What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear?
- Where are you in this story? Where do you place yourself?
- Continue reading through the story, using your imagination. Imagine it playing out like a movie in your head.
- Reflect on that experience. What do you see in a different way? What did you learn about God? What did you learn about yourself? What do you resolve to do differently from here?

### *Create a thanksgiving list*

Stop and make a list of things you are thankful for. Nothing is off limits. Simply acknowledge what God has done and is doing in your life. Write them down, and pray a prayer of thanks for those things. *Possibly share that list with others.*

There are more ways to practice contemplation. Feel free to talk to your group leader for additional ideas.

## **Session 4 – Developing a Christian *Phronesis* through...**

### **Consideration**

**Purpose:** *To have these individuals consider what it means to display a Christian phronesis in their life, in their ministry, and in their leadership.*

**Steps:**

1. *Go back through the past few weeks of meetings and discuss the curriculum to this point. Make sure to touch on the idea of PHRONESIS, as well as the definition of spiritual leadership.*
2. *Talk about the spiritual practices. What did they do? What did they learn about themselves? How did it challenge them? How did it change their thinking?*
3. *Jump into the lesson*

Luke 14:25ff tells the story of Jesus talking with his followers. He tells them that they have to truly count the cost of following him. Being a follower of Jesus isn't easy, and we are to truly think it through before we make a life-altering decision to become a disciple.

*Questions for Consideration*

What must someone consider before they decide to become a Christian?

- What are the costs?
- What are the benefits?
- What does it truly mean to follow Christ?

**Read Philippians 2:5-11**

What does it mean that Jesus was in the "form of God"? What does it mean for Jesus to be like God in this way?

*The Greek word here is the word "morphe." It means form, exact representation, etc. According to theology, Jesus is the very form of God in essence and divinity. He is an equal part of the Trinity. They can touch on other passages (John 1:1ff, 14; Col. 1:15-20; etc.)*

Although Jesus was in the form of God, he made a bold choice to not hold tightly to his divinity. Why do you think Jesus chose to become human?

There are a number of different ways in which this passage can be read:

- **Temporally** – While or Being... “While being in the very form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, but made himself nothing...”
- **Concessively** – Although or Though... “Although Messiah Jesus was in the form of God, a status that means the exercise of power, he acted *out of* character... when he emptied and humbled himself.”
- **Causally** – Because or Since... “*Precisely because* he was in the form of God, he did not regard this divine equality as something to be used for his own advantage...”<sup>16</sup>

The crucifixion of Jesus is not to be considered a **divine accident**, nor is it to be seen as a punitive action undertaken by God. Instead, it points to the very **character** of God Himself.

How do these interpretations change the way we think about “the form of God”?

Paul makes an interesting statement in verse 6. He states that Jesus “did not count/consider equality with God a thing to be used to his own advantage.” What does it mean to you that Jesus “did not consider”?

- What might Jesus be contemplating or considering?
  
- Why might it be important that Jesus “considered?”

**Have someone read:** The Greek word that Paul uses here is ὑγέομαι (*hygeomai*), a verb that can be translated as “think, consider, regard.” This word is used six times in the letter of Philippians, and it serves as a central idea for Paul’s message for these Christians. New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson states that “considering” is central to his argument in chapters 2 and 3 “because it suggests once more the genuinely

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16. O’Brien, 202-203, 214, emphasis mine. O’Brien, 216, then goes on to state that this is “what it means to be God.”



rational character of moral discernment.”<sup>17</sup> For Paul, Jesus’s incarnation was a rational choice that he made, not something that he undertook haphazardly or without weighing his options.

***For the Leader: This section becomes the crux of the discussion. Paul’s use of the term, both in the Christ hymn and throughout the rest of the letter points to the rational decisions one must make as they embark on a significant life change. Just as Jesus “considered” his equality with God, his upcoming mission, his change in form (“morphe”), his humility, and his death BEFORE taking the next steps, so Christians and leaders must consider these next steps. Have them truly consider these questions for themselves. Allow the tension that comes with these questions and answers. Promote discussion.***

What might Jesus be weighing in his mind?

What does Jesus have to give up in order to fulfill his mission?

***The form of God; his place in heaven (for a time); an easy existence; his glory; etc.***

Do you think Jesus truly had to “consider” his mission and what he would be letting go? Why or why not?

***This could cause some deep theological questions, particularly because many will find it difficult to think of Jesus having the ability to make any decisions in regard to this mission. Some places that might be helpful to think about Jesus considering and making a decision would be the Temptations of Jesus and the Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.***

At what points in his life/ministry do you see Jesus weighing his options, considering the outcomes, and making conscious decisions?

What do you think about this interpretation of the passage? Do you agree or disagree with this understanding of “consideration”? Why or why not?

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17. See Luke Timothy Johnson, “Transformation of the Mind and Moral Discernment in Paul,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, NovTSupp 110, edited by J.T. Fitzgerald, et. al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 215-236.

Paul argues that Jesus becomes the ultimate moral example. He did not consider equality with God something that he had to hold onto, but willingly gave it up in order to fulfill God's purposes in the world.

***More information for the Leader:***

***This action was not something that Jesus casually agreed to do but, instead, was something that Christ considered and about which he thought. Johnson contends that Paul's use of the word ἡγήομαι is central to his argument in chapters 2 and 3 "because it suggests once more the genuinely rational character of moral discernment."<sup>18</sup> As Jesus considers the ramifications of making himself nothing and becoming human, he is developing a *phronesis* in line with the will of the Father. This sets Jesus up as a pattern of moral discernment that Paul wants his readers to follow.***

Paul then holds up his own life as an illustration of a life lived in imitation of the way of Jesus.

**Read Philippians 3:4b-11**

In what ways does Paul serve as an example of this lifestyle of consideration?

***Paul gives up the benefits of his old way of life to follow Jesus.***

What does Paul "consider" in his own life?

What did Paul have to give up to grow closer to God and fulfill his mission?

Why do you think Paul was willing to give up his old identity in order to be more like Jesus?

- What are the consequences of Paul's choice?

***Reflection***

Paul calls us "have the same *phronesis* as Jesus." He also lays out his own life as an example of one who made the decision to follow Christ, regardless of the cost.

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18. Luke Timothy Johnson, "Transformation of the Mind and Moral Discernment in Paul," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, NovTSupp 110, edited by J.T. Fitzgerald, et. al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 215-236.

We began this session by asking what someone might have to give up in order to be a Christian. Let's think about leadership for a moment. What must someone consider before they decide to become a *Christian* leader?

- What are the costs?
- What are the benefits?
- What does it mean to truly be a *Christian* leader in every aspect of life? In every meaning of the term?

What might you need to give up to be the person that God needs? To fulfill God's mission?

In the Christ hymn, Jesus considers all of these options and chooses to fulfill God's mission, even though it leads to death. Paul also says that following Jesus's *phronesis* can lead to death. Are we willing to follow Christ even up to the point of death?

Spiritual Disciplines:

Lectio Divina

Journaling

## **Spiritual Disciplines – Session 4**

*Day One:* Journaling – Reflect on your experiences from tonight's session.

- What touched your heart/soul?
- What did you find helpful?
- What did you find challenging or troubling?

*Day Two:* Lectio divina from Philippians 4:8-9 (see next page)

*Day Three:* Journaling – Write your spiritual autobiography. Specifically focus on...

- Why did you become a Christian?
- How has your faith made a difference in your life?
- What has God taught you along the way in your faith journey?

*Day Four:* Journaling – What is your favorite Scripture and why?

- Write out the Scripture in your journal.
- Why is this scripture important to you?
- What does it teach you?
- How has this Scripture manifested itself in your life?

*Day Five:* Journaling – Write about today.

- What gave you joy and life? What brought about sadness or pain?
- In what way(s) did you see God today?
- How did you reflect God in your actions/thoughts/words today?

*Day Six:* Journaling – Write out your prayer to God This prayer does not have to have any specific form; just write your prayer(s) to God.

*Day Seven:* Journaling – What do you want out of life?

- Long-term and short-term goals
- Hopes and dreams; fears and challenges
- What would it take for you to feel happy and content?

### **Lectio Divina – Philippians 4:8-9**

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

What stands out to you from these verses? Why?

What might God be trying to teach you through these words?

Why should we fill our minds with these things? How do these things help us develop a Christian phronesis?

How do we begin to focus our minds on these things?

How would focusing on things that are true, honorable, etc., develop us into better spiritual leaders?

## **Session 5 – Developing a Christian *Phronesis* through...**

### **Humility**

**Purpose:** To convince the participants that humility is an integral part of a Christian lifestyle. Humility isn't weakness but, instead, is a way of becoming more like God. Jesus emptied himself for our sakes. As Christians, particularly as Christian leaders, we are to empty ourselves in humility for the sake of others.

Share your spiritual autobiography with the others in your group. Specifically focus on...

- Why did you choose to become a Christian?
- What have you had to give up because of your faith? What have you gained?
- What has your life been like? Where have you succeeded? Where have you fallen short?

*Have them take notes from others' Stories:*

How did it feel, sharing about your life and faith with one another?

*Questions for Consideration:*

What does "humility" mean to you?

- Does humility look different in Christian and secular contexts? Why or why not?  
***This is up to the group. Have them share their thoughts.***
- What is the difference between true humility and false humility?  
***False humility can take many different forms. It can be pretending to be humble in order to gain respect or garner praise from others. False humility can involve sharing one problem or struggle in order to hide the real problem. False humility can mean presenting one face to one crowd but being different in another. Etc. At its core, false humility is hypocrisy.***
- How can false humility be harmful?

*It can damage relationships, create distrust, damage a person's spirit/soul, create an inability to have a relationship with God or others, etc.*

Does our world value humility? Why or why not?

*This is up to the group. Have them share insights and details.*

In the Greco-Roman world, humility was not considered a virtue. Instead, **honor** and **glory** were the key virtues in the Roman Empire. And this was especially prevalent in the city of Philippi.

*Philippi in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD*

- People across all social **classes** and strata pursued personal glory and honor.

How?

*This was discussed two lessons ago. Specifically, glory and honor were about perception. You did whatever it took to gain esteem from others: seek positions of power, give away money, garner favor, etc.*

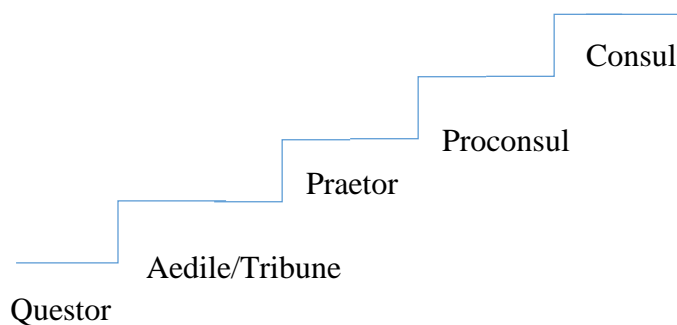
- This was known as the *cursus honorum*, or the “**honors race**.” How did one “compete” in this race?

*See above*

- According to scholar Joseph Hellerman, one achieved honor through **good works**, monetary **donations**, **public works** projects, **patronage**, and the sponsorship of **games**.

*This wasn't just reserved for the wealthy and elite; instead, people from all walks of life competed in this “race” for glory.<sup>19</sup>*

*Cursus honorum*




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19. Hellerman, 51ff.

*All of these positions were gained through age, perception, power, and political favor. One simply competed to outdo others who might seek to take these positions of power. (From here on out the stairs could be represented as stairs using power, authority, and position to advance oneself.)*

What are the implications for one's life if honor can only be achieved by the means the Romans found important?

*Honor was about the perception of others. Participants in this race would always be seeking to outdo the others, putting them down in the process. Honor is all about keeping others happy and looking good to them. Humility wasn't a part of the process; humility was shameful.*

### **Read Philippians 2:5-8**

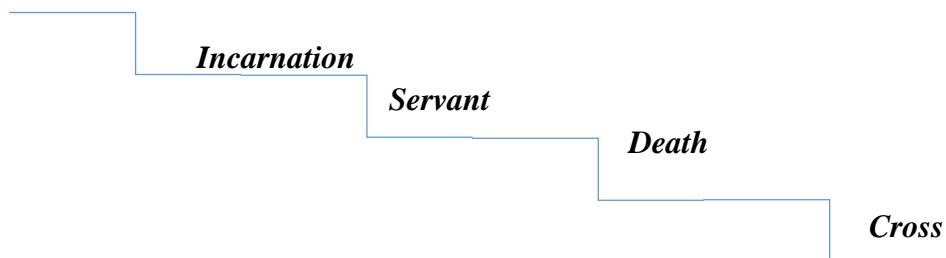
How does the Christ-hymn stand in contrast to the Roman conception of honor and shame?

*Christ becomes the antithesis of the honors race. Christ seeks the lower position. He humbles himself. He becomes obedient to God, he gives up heaven and becomes a man. He becomes a servant. He becomes obedient to death. And that death is on a cross, the most vile way a Roman could think of dying.*

Rather than competing in the *cursus honorum*, Jesus participates in the *cursus pudorum*, “the worsening race.” It was a race to the bottom.

*Cursus pudorum* in the Christ-hymn

### **Form of God**



According to the Christ hymn, how does Jesus go from being in the form of God to being in the form of a servant?



- Kenosis: *Greek word meaning “to empty oneself”*
  
- What do you think Jesus is having to “empty” from himself? In what ways is Jesus “making himself nothing”?
  
- How does Jesus’s *kenosis* demonstrate his humility?

What was Jesus’s motivation in giving up equality with God?

***This is the mission of God: to humble himself for the sake of humanity, so that we might overcome sin and death.***

What might have happened if Jesus *hadn’t* given up equality for the sake of humanity?

***Have them think on this. There is no clear answer, but one that is interesting to think about.***

Why do you think Jesus was willing to give up the glory of heaven to become a servant?

What does the word “servant” mean to you?

### **Read Mark 10:42-45**

What does this passage say about Jesus’s concepts of honor and leadership?

***Leadership is about service of others. It isn’t about lording over others with our power. Instead, it is about laying aside one’s own glory and honor, one’s own desires, for the good of others.***

*Personal Application:*

***For the leader: These next questions get to the heart of the matter. Humility is about being willing to empty ourselves for the sake of others. It is about overcoming our pride and arrogance in order to help others come to know God. Just as Jesus practiced kenosis in his own life, so too must leaders practice kenosis in their lives and leadership.***

Why is humility an important part of spiritual leadership?

Are our church's goals in line with this form of leadership? Why or why not?

Is your own spiritual life in line with this form of leadership? Why or why not?

Jesus practiced *kenosis* in his own lifestyle and leadership. He “emptied himself” for the sake for God’s mission and for the good of others. What might *you* have to give up to be more like Christ? What might you have to empty from yourself? What would it take for you to develop a *phronesis* of humility?

Paul calls all Christians to live with a Christian *phronesis*, a pattern of thinking, acting, and being. This includes imitating Christ’s humility in our lives and in our leadership.

- How might practicing humility develop a Christlike *phronesis* in you?
  
- How might a Christlike *phronesis* change others’ perceptions about life, faith, God, and the church?

How do leaders “advance” (i.e. make decisions, lead, encourage, inspire, teach, correct, etc.) while practicing humility?

*Spiritual Discipline:*  
Confession

## **Spiritual Discipline – Confession**

Confession is one of the most difficult things we will ever do. We want to look like good people, like we have it all together and we never mess up. So often we put up a false front; we wear a mask so that no one will know what we are really like. And we worry what others think:

- *Will they like me if they could see the real me?*
- *What would people think of me if they knew what was going on inside?*

Richard Foster puts this fear like this: “Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet this thinking ignores the basic truth about all of us: We are all sinners. We all mess up in our relationship with God and our relationships with one another. And when we ignore our sinfulness, or we sweep it under the rug, we negate the chances of ever understanding true forgiveness and grace. We must understand ourselves and acknowledge our sin in order to bring these things before our God. True repentance requires true honesty.

The Bible often speaks of sin, forgiveness, confession and relationship in the same breath:

- “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin.” (Ps. 32:5)
- “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.” (Prov. 28:13-14)
- “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” (Mt. 6:12)
- “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

God calls us to have an honest relationship with himself and with others. We don’t hide our sins from God; instead, we invite God into our lives, showing him the brokenness he already knows exists within us. He is the one who loves us unconditionally, in spite of our sinfulness, and he offers us true forgiveness.

God also calls us to confess our sins to one another. There is something powerful in sharing our challenges with another person, being open and vulnerable with them. And true love for another is listening to their hearts, hearing their vulnerability, and speaking

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20. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998), 145.

godly words of grace, forgiveness, and repentance into their lives. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Our brother... has been given to us to help us. He hears the confession of our sins in Christ’s stead and he forgives our sins in Christ’s name.”<sup>21</sup>

Confession requires humility: the willingness to open ourselves up to God and to others. It also requires humility with ourselves, as we look at who we truly are and what we are like. We are going to do a number of different practices this week in order to help us consider who we are, how we might need to change in order to be more like Christ.

Honestly, this can be a difficult process. It is uncomfortable to look at our own lives; it often brings guilt and shame and fear. Sharing those things with others can also be scary, as we reveal the details of our inner life with someone else. Yet when we are honest with ourselves, God, and others, we can better understand God’s forgiveness and offer that forgiveness to others as well.

*Day One:* Examen

- See next pages

*Day Two:* Examen

- Practice twice today
- Choose a different set of questions to consider

*Day Three:* Particular Examen

- See next pages
- Bring that challenge before God

*Day Four:* (1) Continue Examen

- (2) Prayerfully consider someone to whom you can confess

*Day Five:* (1) Continue Examen

- (2) Continue praying for that individual, *or*
- (3) Confess to someone

*Day Six:* (1) Continue Examen

- (2) Continue praying for that individual, *or*
- (3) Confess to someone

*Day Seven:* (1) Continue Examen

- (2) Confess with someone
- (3) Pray about the possibility of an accountability/discipleship group or a

mentor

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21. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: ), 112.

## **General Examen of Conscience**

Ignatius of Loyola designed the spiritual exercises to help Christians grow and mature in their relationship with God. An integral part of the exercises is the Examen, a self-examination of one's heart and life. There are two parts to the Examen: the General Examen of Conscience and the Particular Examen. Both practices help discern any particular sins or problems in our lives that we might need to confess to another.

Ignatius summarizes the general Examen in five points:

6. **Give thanks** to God for his benefits
7. **Ask grace** to know my own sins
8. **Ask an account** of the soul from the hour of my arising
9. **Ask pardon** for my faults.
10. **Resolve** to amend them, with God's grace.

The Examen is then closed with prayer. Also, if any confession is warranted you are encouraged to seek out someone to whom you can confess your sins and need for forgiveness.

David Fleming presents the *Examen* as a prayer to God. Each of Ignatius' steps is seen as a prayer rather than a stepping stone. The prayer is as follows:<sup>22</sup>

1. **God, thank you.** This is a thanksgiving for God's presence in our lives and a reminder that God is with us right now.
2. **God, send your Holy Spirit upon me.** Let the Spirit give me wisdom so I can see where you have been with me today.
3. **God, let me look at my day.** Where have I seen you near? "Where have I ignored you, run from you, perhaps even rejected you this day?"
4. **God, let me be grateful and ask forgiveness.**
5. **God, stay close.**

Mark Thibideaux outlines the Examen with five "R" words:

1. Relish
2. Request
3. Review
4. Repent
5. Resolve

There are as many different ways to practice the *Examen* as there are practitioners. The only thing that limits the reach of the *Examen* is one's imagination.

Below are some possible questions you might use to do the Examen. You are to practice the Examen throughout the week, both the General and the Particular Examen. Feel free to use these questions, and also to write your own.

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**Sample Questions to Ask:*****Challenges:***

1. What did I struggle with today?
2. When did I have this struggle? What was going on? Where was I?
3. When have I had these struggles before?
4. Am I improving or digressing in my struggles in this area? How do I know?
5. Who can I lean on for support?

***Love:***

1. How did I see God's love for me today?
2. How did I share God's love with others today?
3. How can I give love to others tomorrow?
4. To whom in my life should I focus on showing God's love?

***Thankfulness:***

1. For what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment am I least grateful?
2. What are some ways in which God gave me good gifts today?
3. How can I improve in sharing my thankfulness with God and with others?

***Connection and Communion:***

1. When did I feel closest to God today? When did I feel the farthest away?
2. When did I feel closest to others today? Who was it? Why? When did I feel challenged in my relationships with others today? Who was it, and why?
3. Where was I living out the fruit of the Spirit today? How did I see it in myself?  
How did I see it in others?
4. What did I do to take care of myself today? What did others do to take care of me today?

## **Particular Examen of Conscience**

In the particular examination, Ignatius calls those who are participating in the *Exercises* to examine their hearts twice a day in order to discern the presence of God. When you arise in the morning, you are to pray about the one particular sin or fault that you want to overcome that day. Each time you sin you are recognize that sin when you commit it during the day and ask forgiveness for that sin. Twice a day (typically noon and supper) you are challenged to reflect on your day to this point, particularly in light of the sin that you resolved earlier in the day to correct. Each hour should be examined, and you should place a dot on the line for the number of times you fell into that sin. The same practice is repeated at supper, and then the subsequent day. Throughout the week the chart is consulted to see what progress is being made, and the goal is to have fewer dots as each day of the week progresses.<sup>23</sup> The ultimate goal is to “rid myself of [the sins] to the extent they hinder me.”<sup>24</sup>

Chart: \_\_\_\_\_ (sin/challenge/shortcoming)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

The goal is to keep track of your experience in order to chart how God is at work in you in specific ways. Simply naming our sin and realizing it is there causes us to bring it to the forefront of our mind.

Pray over that sin, and then release it to God. Twice a day come back and look at this list. Reflect on your day, and mark how often that sin occurred. At the end, pray that God will

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23. Summarized from *Spiritual Exercises*, 24-32.

24. *Ibid.*, 23.



continue to help you in this area and continuing extending grace and mercy. Close in thanksgiving.

## **Session 6 – Developing a Christian *Phronesis* through...**

### **Service**

***Purpose:*** *To realize that service is an important aspect of Christian leadership. Christ lived and acted as a servant in his own ministry. He “took the form of a servant,” for “even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve.” Service isn’t optional when it comes to Christian leadership and a Christian phronesis.*

#### **Steps:**

- 1. Summarize the last few lessons. Specifically focus on the term *PHRONESIS* and the way humility plays into developing a Christlike pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling. Also talk about the definition of spiritual leadership.**
- 2. Spend a few minutes processing last week’s spiritual practice: Confession. How did it go? How did it feel? To whom did they confess? What did they learn about themselves through the practice of Examen? What made them uncomfortable? All of these questions might help ascertain the effects of the experience.**
- 3. Go into the lesson.**

We are going to start today’s session with “Dwelling in the Word, Dwelling in the World.” It is a form of *lectio divina* that focuses both on what the text says and how the text might be applied to our individual lives. We are going to read **Philippians 2:1-16**. As you read, look for places in which service is emphasized in the text. Feel free to underline, write in the margins, or take any notes that you wish.

***Philippians 2:1-16a*** – *Have them discuss their insights.*

#### *Questions to Consider*

In what ways is Jesus a servant in the Christ hymn?

***Christ gives up the form of God to be the form of a servant. He humbles himself. He dies for the sake of the world (although not specifically in the hymn itself).***

Think of some examples in which we see Jesus serving others in his life and ministry.

***Examples: Touching lepers, raising the dead, provided food for 5000, changing water to wine, driving out demons, healing the sick, etc.***

What do those examples teach us about Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus emphasized service in his own life?

***Mark 10:45 might be helpful again here.***

Look at Philippians 2:6-7 again. What does it mean that Jesus was in the “very nature of a servant”? How does that compare to Paul’s earlier statement that Jesus was in “very nature God”?

***The Greek word for nature/form is “morphe.” The word is in both phrases. The Christ hymn intentionally parallels these two words.***

In Session 4 we discussed the different ways that verse 6 could be read: *temporally*, *concessively*, and *causally*. Write those translations below:

1. Temporally – While or Being... “While being in the very form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, but made himself nothing...”
2. Concessively – Although or Though... “Although Messiah Jesus was in the form of God, a status that means the exercise of power, he acted *out of* character... when he emptied and humbled himself.”
3. Causally – Because or Since... “*Precisely because* he was in the form of God, he did not regard this divine equality as something to be used for his own advantage...”

Which of these do you think is the *best* translation? Why?

***All three translations are an important understanding of the text. The juxtaposition of both CONCESSIVE and CAUSAL understandings is helpful. For Greco-Romans, a god giving up power would be out of character. But for GOD, it IS his character.***

How is “service” a quality and characteristic of God?

If Jesus became a servant *because* he was in the form of God, how does that change our understanding of ministry and leadership?

***Leadership isn't about power, or decision-making, or authority, or prestige, etc.***

***Instead, it is about serving others: serving others so that they can become more like Jesus, who was a servant of others.***

Throughout the course of this study we have been reading the book of Philippians. What are some places in the epistle that talk about service?

1. ***Introduction: Philippians 1:1 – “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus...”***
2. ***Recipients: Deacons (1:2); literally a word for “servant”***
3. ***Paul's example – 2:17***
4. ***Timothy's example – 2:19-24, esp. 22.***
5. ***Epaphroditus' example – 2:25-30, esp. 25***
6. ***The gift from the Philippians – 4:10, 14-19***
7. ***Others???***

Throughout the epistle Paul gives examples of those living a servant lifestyle. Who are these individuals, and how are they demonstrating service in their own lives?

1. Philippians 2:17 – **Paul**  
***Poured out like a drink offering for their sakes...***
2. Philippians 2:19-24 – **Timothy**  
***Shows genuine concern for their welfare; looks out for the interests of others, like Jesus Christ would.***
3. Philippians 2:25-30 – **Epaphroditus**  
***Helped take care of Paul's needs, even though he almost died doing so. He served in their place. And he is longing for the Philippians, because he has distressed them with his illness.***

Throughout the text Paul emphasizes humility in place of pride and vainglory. How does service contrast pride and vainglory?

***Humility is about lowering oneself, seeking to serve and love for the sake of God. Pride is attempting to raise oneself to a position of influence or status so that one might be perceived well by others. Etc. Vainglory is literally “empty glory,” something that is unimportant and, ultimately, empty of any meaning or value.***

In your opinion, is service an integral part of leadership? Why or why not?

***This curriculum argues that it is. Allow the group to debate the subject, however.***

One of the questions that kept coming up in the midst of the curriculum preparation concerned service and leadership. One of the participants asked it this way: “Is taking out the trash a quality of leadership?” So, what do you think? What qualifies as servant leadership and what doesn’t? How does one determine what is leadership and what is service?

In his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren states that servanthood is an integral part of both the Christian life and Christian leadership. He states:

*“Thousands of books have been written on leadership, but few on servanthood. Everyone wants to lead; no one wants to be a servant. We would rather be generals than privates. Even Christians want to be ‘servant-leaders,’ not just plain servants. But to be like Jesus is to be a servant. That is what he called himself... It is possible to serve in church for a lifetime without ever being a servant. **You must have a servant’s heart.**”*<sup>25</sup>

What strikes you from that quote?

What are the qualities of “a servant’s heart,” especially in leadership?

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25. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 257-258; emphasis mine.

In your opinion, what is our motivation for service? Why should we serve others?

How does service towards others help us develop the *phronesis* of Jesus in our own lives?  
*Service makes us place ourselves in a position of humility. When we serve, clean, help, get dirty, etc., we are emptying ourselves of our pride and arrogance. We are seeking to lower ourselves to help others. And we do it to the glory of God.*

*Jesus did the same in his life and ministry. Jesus served... even when he didn't want to. Even though he didn't have to. But he became a servant... because that is what God does. He serves.*

*When we serve, we are being like Jesus. We are conforming to his pattern of thinking, feeling, and being... even when we struggle to serve.*

*Spiritual Disciplines:*

Meditation

Prayer

Service

*Schedule:*

*Day One:*      Mediation over the thought  
                          Prayer

*Day Two:*      Lectio divina  
                          Prayer

*Day Three:*    Prayer  
                          Service

*Day Four:*    Prayer  
                          Service

*Day Five:*    Prayer  
                          Service

*Day Six:*      Prayer  
                          Service

*Day Seven:*    Prayer  
                    Service  
                    Reflection

## **Day One – Meditation Thoughts**

*“Christian leaders are people who live the Cross – humbling themselves; voluntarily divesting themselves of their rights and privileges; trusting not in their own wisdom; insisting not on their own way; doing nothing out of selfish ambition; seeking not their own advantage but the benefit of others; in humility, considering others better than themselves; giving up their lives for the sake of the lost, the vulnerable, the neglected... If this is the normative pattern of leadership, it means that the crucial question for each leader is: how far are you willing to go in your discipleship?”<sup>26</sup>*

What does Greenman say about service and leadership?

Is it easy for you to think about service and leadership in this way? Why or why not?

Write out the words of **Matthew 16:24-26** below. Consider how they apply to Greenman’s message.

What will it take for you to serve in this way? What might you need to give up? What might you gain from this form of service?

Write out a prayer to God about service. Pray that God will guide you in serving in this way.

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26. Jeffrey Greenman, “The Shape of Christian Leadership,” Tyndale Seminary, Ontario, February 10, 2004. Address given to Tyndale Seminary, Ontario, Canada. Available online at <http://www.tyndale.ca/leadership/files>.



## **Day Two – Lectio Divina**

Read the passage through two or three times. Dwell on thoughts, words, or feelings that jump out at you. Feel free to record those thoughts below.

### ***Mark 10:42-45***

*Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

What struck you from this passage?

What does Jesus say about leadership and service in this passage?

Is this form of leadership easy for you in your life? Why or why not?

In what areas might it be easier than others?

What does it mean to “be slave of all”? How does that statement make you feel?

It is easier to serve some people than others. Who is it easy for you to serve? Who is it difficult for you to serve? Why?

Spend some time in prayer. Pray through this passage, that God would teach you what it means to be a servant. Feel free to write that prayer below, if you wish.

List a couple of people that you find difficult to serve. Pray about those individuals, as well.

## **Days Three through Seven – Prayer and Service**

Start your day praying that God would help you be a servant today and that you might find specific ways to serve others. Pray for specific individuals to serve, as well.

Note those opportunities below. Feel free to record any other information as well (i.e. service performed, how you felt, reflections on the experience, etc.)

*Day Three:*

Person Served:

Reflection:

*Day Four:*

Person Served:

Reflection:

*Day Five:*

Person Served:

Reflection:

**Day Six: Consider serving someone from your list of difficult people on Day Two.**

Person Served:

Reflection: *If you served one of your “difficult people,” how did that service influence you today?*

**Day Seven:**

Person Served:

Reflection:

**Reflection over the Week:**

What did you learn through these activities this week?

Did you grow closer to God through these experiences? Why or why not? If so, how did you grow?

Did you change the way that you felt about one of your difficult people? Why or why not? If so, how did your perception change?

## **Session 7 – Developing a Christian *Phronesis* through...**

### **Obedience**

***Purpose:*** *At the end of this session, participants will understand that leadership involves submission of self to God and submission to the needs of others. Submission and obedience aren't weakness; instead, they are markers of one following Christ.*

*Questions to Consider:*

When you hear the word “obedience” (or “obey”), what comes to mind?

Does “obey” carry a positive or negative connotation in your mind? Why?

In your opinion, is obedience the same thing as submission? Why or why not?

*This lesson assumes that the words are synonyms. However, allow the group to discuss this and come to their own conclusions. However, the words are synonyms in the way they are used in Greek literature.*

*Others' thoughts:*

In Greek, the two words *are* different, although they share the same prefix:

- The prefix ὑπ is to be under or be below.
- *Hupakoos* (ὑπήκοος) – to be obedient
- *Hupotasso* (ὑποτάσσω) – to subordinate, to subject oneself, to obey.

Read Philippians 2:5-11.

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

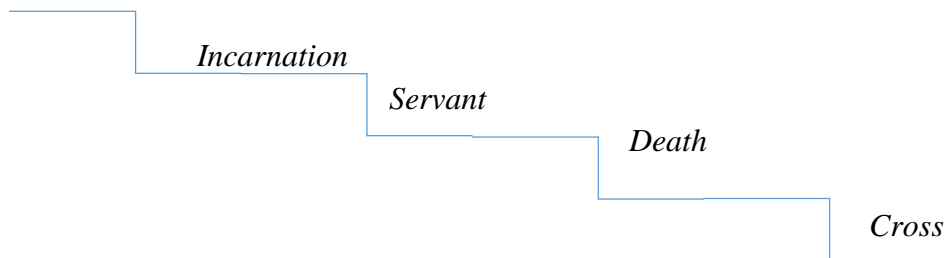
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

According to the text, how is Jesus obedient?

- *He becomes obedient to the point of death... on a cross.*
- *It can also be implied that Jesus is obedient to the mission of God through his humility, kenosis, and incarnation.*

Chart:

*Form of God*



What makes Jesus willing to be obedient to God?

*Stop and consider for a moment...* Because this idea is very difficult for some. Just as it is hard for us to consider that Jesus “considered” before taking on God’s mission, it is also difficult for us to think about Jesus’s obedience to God. What are some questions that might arise from this idea?

*Examples: Does this make Jesus subordinate? How do we understand equality in the Trinity?*

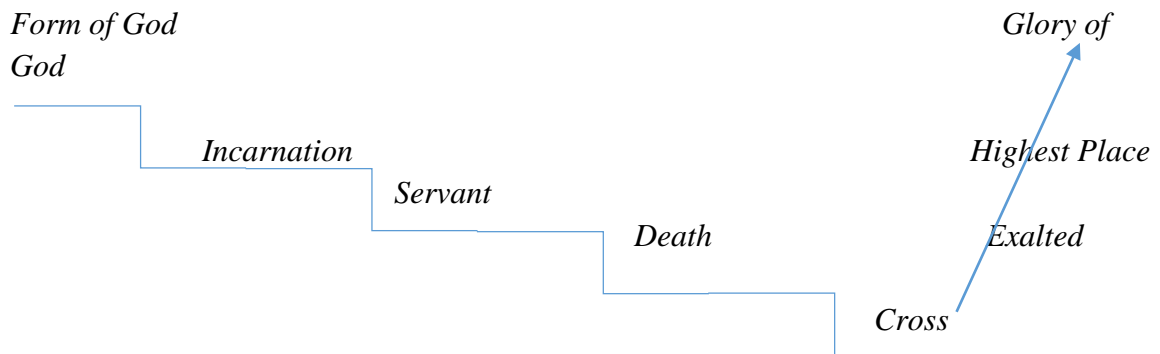
*Does this make Jesus “less” than God the Father? How does this change our understanding of God’s mission? Etc.*

In your opinion, is Jesus’s obedience to God voluntary? Why or why not?

Do you think this obedience was easy or difficult for Jesus? Why?

According to the Christ hymn, why is obedience an integral part of Jesus’s life and mission?

*Chart:*







- Philippians 4:2-3

- *Others?*

What do these passages teach us about obedience and submission, both to God AND to one another?

Write the definition for *phronesis* again: “Phronesis is the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.”

How do “submission” and “obedience” help us develop a Christlike *phronesis* in our own lives?

*Submission to God allows us to become what God wants us to be. It is one of the ways we can imitate Christ. Submission to the needs of others allows us to seek how to best help others grow to be more like Christ. It also allows us to get past our own desires and seek the will of God in our lives, the lives of others, and our congregation.*

*Questions for Leadership Reflection:*

How are the ideas of obedience and submission important in the life of a Christian leader?

Is obedience/submission something we talk about in leadership? Why or why not? If so, in what ways?

To whom should Christian leaders be submissive? When should Christian leaders be obedient?

When should Christian leaders *not* be obedient/submissive?

*Important to note that leaders aren't those who simply roll over or refuse to make difficult decisions. Instead, they balance the needs of the congregation with the will/mission of God.*

*The spiritual practices this week requires you to know the needs of your participants. As you have grown to know them over the past few weeks, you have probably discerned their hearts as they have shared with you. What have you heard them say? What HAVEN'T they said? Where are they strong? Where are they struggling? Which spiritual practices were incredibly difficult for each one, and what does that say about their spiritual lives?*

*Your goal is to work with each one and help ascertain in what ways they need to grow. Find out how they would like to continue growing, but also use your own insights into their spiritual life to look for things they might not acknowledge (or even know consciously).*

*For other spiritual practices that might help, see books like:*

- *Adele Calhoun, Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*
- *Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline*
- *M. Robert Mulholland, Invitation to a Journey*
- *Donald Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*
- *Dallas Willard, Renovation of the Heart*
- *Etc.*

*Spiritual Discipline for the Week:*

Which spiritual discipline(s) have you MOST enjoyed?

Which spiritual discipline(s) have you LEAST enjoyed?

In what ways do you feel like you still need to grow spiritually?

Facilitator's thoughts:

How might I practice these spiritual disciplines this week?

*Day One:*

*Day Two:*

*Day Three:*

*Day Four:*

*Day Five:*

*Day Six:*

*Day Seven:*

Reflection on experience:

## **Session 8 – Developing a Christian *Phronesis* through...** **Cruciformity**

***Purpose:*** The cross is the center of both Christian life and spiritual leadership. **Spiritual leaders practice cruciformity:** allowing every aspect of their lives to be shaped by the cross.

*Questions to Consider:*

What does the cross mean to you?

How do people view the cross today?

In the Roman Empire, how did people view crucifixion and a cross?

Who died on crosses?

Why would the cross be considered such a shameful thing?

*Crucifixion was considered the lowest form of punishment, a “torturous, violent method of handling those who were perceived to threaten the empire’s ‘peace and security’.” Crucifixion was used “for slaves, pirates, and enemies of the state. Romans citizens were usually exempt from crucifixion except for particularly heinous crimes, such as high treason.”<sup>27</sup> Cicero argued that it was the most vile, pitiable of deaths, inflicted only on slaves (not on Roman citizens), and called it a “plague.” Jews saw it in a similar fashion because of a statement in the Torah found in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (ESV) – ““And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain*

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27. Wikipedia, “Crucifixion.”

*all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.”*

*The cross was a shameful thing. To die on a cross was the most humiliating of deaths, because the crucified were put on display for everyone to see, both as a form of shame and as a message to warn anyone else who might rebel.*

How would people in Philippi, a culture based on gaining honor and avoiding shame, view the cross?

In the Greco-Roman world, religion was all about **power**. How does the cross stand in contrast to that idea?

Based on those thoughts, why would the early church embrace the idea of a crucified Messiah?

*Although crucifixion was shameful in Greco-Roman thinking, a religion based around a crucified figure spread quickly throughout the Empire. While the early church did not display the cross until the **fourth** century, they readily told the story of Jesus’s death for the sake of humanity.*

Where are some places in which the cross is talked about in positive terms?

**Examples:**

- **“<sup>23</sup>If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” (Luke 9:23-24)**
- **“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ – that is, Jesus Christ crucified.” (1 Cor. 2:2)**
- **Paul knew it was considered strange and even foolish. It is offensive!**  
**“<sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Cor. 1:22-25)**
- **“<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he**

*was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...” (1 Cor. 15:3-4)*

- *“<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)*

**Read the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 again.**

Why do you think Jesus was willing to humble himself *so much* that he died a humiliating death on the cross?

In your opinion, was the cross necessary in the story of salvation? Why or why not?

*The Christ hymn argues that it is vital. Jesus became obedient to God’s plan of salvation... which required his death.*

Theologian Michael Gorman believes that Philippians 2:5-11 is the master story of Paul’s theology. In Paul’s thinking, God is cruciform. For Paul, everything goes back to what happened on the cross.

- Cruciform: *something built in the shape of a cross.*
- How does the cross display the character of God? *Have them think back on the discussion that the Christ hymn is causal: “BECAUSE Jesus was in the form of God, he acted COMPLETELY IN CHARACTER when he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped... and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*  
*God sacrifices himself for us.*

According to Gorman, cruciformity is a life lived in imitation of Christ. How does this compare with *phronesis*?

*Theological Background: Paul’s narrative, Paul’s overarching story, is the story of Christ crucified. That God came in the flesh, lived among us, taught us about the fulfillment of God’s plans, died for our sins, was resurrected for God’s (and our) glory, and commissioned us to continue his work.*

*Michael Gorman is a theologian who has written a number of books of Paul’s theology and ethics. Gorman argues that Paul is best understood not just as a theologian, but as a person who is calling his people to a specific practice. We are to live a life that is transformed by the Gospel. Paul calls us to a life that is conformed to the cross through baptism and new life lived to God’s glory. For Gorman, this new life is one of*

*“cruciformity”: it is a life shaped and patterned after the cross. Gorman calls cruciformity “conformity to the crucified Christ.” He then goes on to write, “This conformity is a dynamic of correspondence in daily life to the strange story of Christ crucified as the primary way of experiencing the love and grace of God.”*<sup>28</sup>

*Cruciformity involves the shaping of our entire lives to the pattern of the cross. Spirituality, then, “is a relationship with the triune God that impacts their daily life with others.”*<sup>29</sup> *Thus, cruciformity and phronesis are very similar: both are about conforming oneself to the pattern of Christ we see demonstrated in his life and his death.*

How do we, as Christians, embrace the “death” aspects of crucifixion?

*Some examples include:*

- *Baptism is joining in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-4)*
- *Jesus calls us to “take up our cross daily and follow him.” (Luke 9:23ff)*
- *We are to “put to death” the misdeeds of the body (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5)*
- *We are to “die to sin” (Rom. 6:2, 7, 11; 1 Peter 2:24)*
- *Etc.*

Read **Philippians 3:18-19**. What does it mean to be an “enemy of the cross”?

What does it mean to be a FRIEND of the cross?

I want you to think for a moment: *Are you willing to embrace the cross?* If so, what does *cruciformity* require of you?

Although Paul wants all Christians to develop this *phronesis* of cruciformity, he specifically commands this lifestyle from the spiritual leaders of the congregation. This

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28. Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 4-5.

29. *Ibid.*, 3.

letter is addressed to both “all God’s **holy people**,” but also to the “**overseers and deacons**” (Phil. 1:1).

Why would a Christlike *phronesis* of cruciformity be important in spiritual leadership?

- *A leader cannot help others look more like Christ in their own lives if the leader himself/herself isn’t becoming more like Christ in their own lives.*
- *The cross is the center of Christian faith; leaders must represent a lifestyle conformed to that pattern.*
- *Theologian James Thompson states, “Leadership in the Pauline communities was inseparable from the life of sacrifice first demonstrated by the Christ who abandoned divine prerogatives and ‘emptied himself’ for the sake of others (Phil. 2:7). The sign of Paul’s legitimacy as an apostle and servant of Christ was his participation in the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 4:10; cf. 6:4; 11:23). Those who continue Paul’s task also deny themselves for the sake of others.”<sup>30</sup>*
- *The cross is the central narrative of the New Testament. Jesus calls us, as his followers, to take up our cross. As leaders, we bear the mantle of leadership by inviting others to take up their crosses just as we follow Jesus in taking up our own.*
- *What does that mean to you?*

What happens when leaders *don’t* keep the cross at the center?

*We are going to break for a few minutes for a time of lectio divina and reflection. Read through Galatians 2:20, and pray about that verse.*

- *What strikes me from this verse?*
- *Is this verse true in my own life? Why or why not?*
- *What might God want me to hear, learn, or do from this verse today?*

*Share your insights. Record others’ thoughts below:*

***Truly have them dig deep in this section. Ask them to be open and honest. Model that for them in your own responses, as well.***

Would you say that you are a *cruciform* leader? Why or why not?

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30. James W. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 241-242.



Would you say your church has cruciform leaders? Why or why not?

If the church were to become more cruciform, how might it change? What might we observe? What would be different?

*Spiritual Disciplines:*

Prayer

- Pray that God would continue helping you become cruciform more and more.
- This might require more thanksgiving, confession, introspection, etc. Feel free to incorporate other spiritual disciplines from the past few weeks.
- Pray, also, for your own leadership and for the church.

***Ask them to commit to praying DAILY. Have them come up with a plan for when and how they are going to pray. As the group leader, check on each individual during the week and hold them accountable.***

Listening

- Our goal is to listen to two other people this week.
  - o Spend time with one individual and ask about their own spiritual life. What is their spiritual story? How are they growing and developing? What struggles are they having? Where are they seeing God in their own lives? Where do they go from here?
  - o Ask another individual to talk about the church. What do they see as its strengths? What are its challenges? Why do they choose this church over other options? What do they think God is doing in this group of people? How might they want to see the church grow and develop?
- Summarize those thoughts and be ready to share them with the group.

## **Session 9 – The Goal of Leadership**

***Purpose:*** *At the end of this lesson, the participants should understand the topic of leadership more clearly. They should begin to articulate what leadership means to them, and also how they will begin to take on spiritual leadership in the congregation. We also want them to understand the meaning of spiritual leadership in comparison to leadership in other facets.*

Why do leaders exist? What are the purposes and goals of leadership?

***Get their responses. Hopefully by this point they will understand that spiritual leadership is about following Jesus and helping others do the same.***

Throughout this leadership curriculum we have been operating with a specific definition of *spiritual leadership*. Write that definition below:

- *Spiritual leadership is... **a process of being conformed to the likeness of Christ. Then one can foster a relationship of influence in which the leader can help others be conformed to the likeness of Christ.***
- A simple way to say this is that spiritual leaders are **following Jesus** in their own lives and **helping others** do the same in theirs.

One of the biggest questions facing the church, and its leaders, is how we define success. In order to define success, we have to have an end goal: What is the ultimate goal that leaders are trying to bring their people to? That end-goal helps us determine whether or not we are successful in our leadership. From that end goal we can then set a vision for how we hope to achieve that goal.

- What would you say is the end-goal of this congregation and its leaders? What is our vision?
- Do you think that end-goal is being achieved? Why or why not?
- Do you think your congregation's vision is big enough? Do you think that this vision is God's vision for your congregation?

God has a plan and a vision for each congregation. We can call that “God’s preferred future” for his people. This future doesn’t have to be specific: “I want you to go here, do these things, grow by two hundred members, etc.” Instead, it is an end goal that God wants for each individual and each congregation, and a general trajectory on how to achieve that goal. In today’s session we are going to talk about God’s preferred future in more detail. And we will do that by going back into the Christ hymn.

**Read Philippians 2:5-11.**

As we have reflected on this passage for the past nine weeks, your understanding and comprehension has probably grown. In your thinking, why does Jesus humble himself by emptying himself of equality with God and submitting himself to death on a cross?

*This should reflect the discussions that were held in previous sessions. If not, have them think back and reflect on what they’ve done to this point. If needed, go back in the curriculum book.*

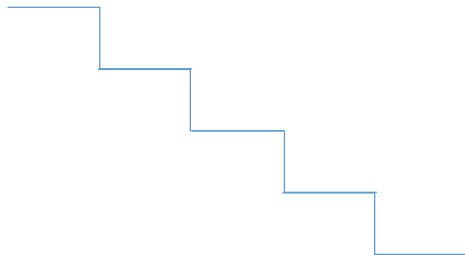
In **verse 9** Paul uses the word “therefore.” How do verses 9-11 hinge on what took place in verses 6-8?

*Because Christ humbled himself and died, God exalted him to the highest place. All of this was done so that people would give glory to God.*

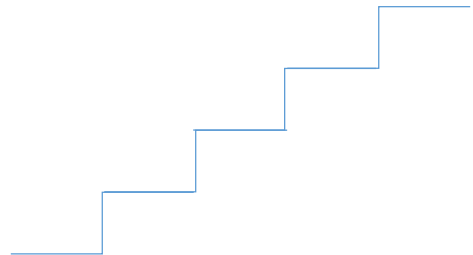
What are the outcomes of Jesus’s humility and death?

Charts:

*Cursus pudorum*



*Cursus honorum*



What is the ultimate “end-goal” of Jesus’s humility and exaltation?

- The glory of God (the Father).



- With others outside of the congregation?

According to Paul, this is Christ's *phronesis*. His pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting was always directed towards giving God the glory in every aspect of his life.

- What would our lives look like if our *phronesis* was the same as Christ's? How would that change our life and leadership?

***Through spiritual practices that deepen our relationship with God. That would also change the way that we act towards and interact with one another.***

***As we lead the congregation, we do everything to the glory of God. We humble ourselves, we serve, we love, we obey, we lead... so that God gets the glory.***

- As spiritual leaders, how can we help others attain this same *phronesis* in their own lives?

***We help them develop spiritual practices that develop a Christlike phronesis in their lives. We ask them to follow Christ with us.***

There are a number of passages in the epistle to the Philippians that talk about a *phronetic* lifestyle based on Christ. Read these passages listed below and answer the following questions:

- **Philippians 1:9-11**

- o What are the characteristics of this *phronesis*? ***Love abounding in wisdom and knowledge; growing in maturity; discernment about what is best; purity and blamelessness; all to the praise and glory of God.***
- o Illustrate this passage with a picture, chart, etc.
- o What is Paul's end-goal for these individuals? ***God's glorification***

- **Philippians 2:1-5**

- o According to Paul, what are the characteristics that are displayed in a follower of Christ in our relationships with one another? ***Every action and aspect of our being reflects Christ's character. Be specific from the text, but it can also expand out.***

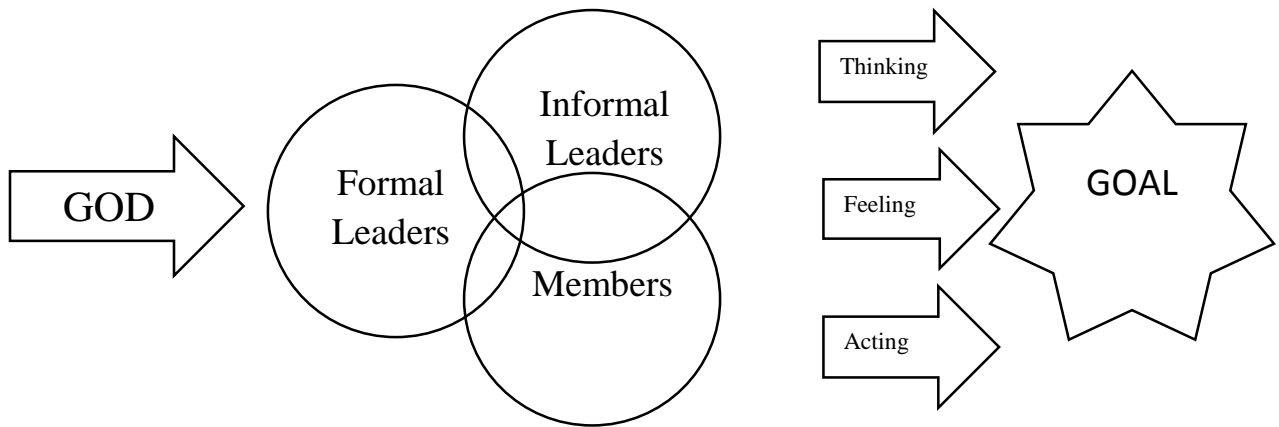
- How is this a reflection of a Christlike *phronesis*?
  
- What is Paul's end-goal for these individuals? *That they should develop a Christlike phronesis.*
  
- **Philippians 4:4-7**
  - What are the characteristics that are displayed in a follower of Christ in our relationships with one another? *Joy, gentleness, trust, prayer, peace, comfort/security in Christ.*
  
  - How are joy and peace a reflection of a Christlike *phronesis*?
  
  - What is Paul's end-goal for these individuals? *Security in Christ, a life of peace because of what God has done.*

Randy Harris, a professor at ACU, says, "The New Testament has almost nothing to say about leadership. And what it does say is often in the negative: "Don't be like..." But the New Testament has a lot to say about followership. Leaders are those who say "Come, follow Christ *with* me."

- What are some ways in which you can help others follow Christ better in their own lives?
  
- List some individuals that you think you could help disciple to be more like Jesus:

As leaders, our goal is to follow Christ in our own lives, allowing him to develop our entire self to be more like him. If we have a Christlike *phronesis*, we will allow Christ to transform our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions. And we want to help others do the same, living their lives to the glory of God.

A great illustration of spiritual leadership might be:



***Triangles:***

***God's arrow: spiritual formation through relationship and spiritual practices***

***Circles: Formal Leaders; Informal Leaders; Members***

***Arrows: Thinking, Feeling, Acting***

***Goal: Glory of God; everyone praising him with their lives. The exultation of Christ. (They can also use this chart to make that goal specific).***

What might you add to this illustration? What is missing?

***For example, God doesn't just work through formal leaders. Nor is spiritual formation just for those in positions of leadership. The arrows could point to all three circles.***

So, what is the ultimate vision/end-goal of God?

***God's glory; everyone praising Jesus and God***

What does this mean for your congregation?

***Get more specific about vision here. What role does THIS congregation play in this goal?***

***Spiritual Disciplines:***

Our goal for next week is to discern more about God's preferred future in our own lives, in the lives of our congregants, and in the mission of our congregation. I want our spiritual disciplines this week to be geared towards that discovery.

*Spend time in prayer.*

- Talk to God about your own life:
  - o Where do you need to continue growing and maturing?
  - o How can you use your strengths and gifts to bless others?
  - o How might God want you to lead in this congregation going forward?
- Discern your congregation:
  - o Pray about what God is doing in your church. Ask that God will help you see more clearly in the mission of the church and the lives of individuals.
  - o Pray that God would begin to reveal his preferred future for your congregation. What might God want this church to do/be/become?
- Spend time with others:
  - o Pick a couple of individuals you can speak to this week.
  - o Listen to their hearts. Ask questions. Listen to their spiritual stories.
  - o Ask them how they see the church. What are their hopes and visions for the congregation?
  - o Ask them how they see themselves. What are their hopes and visions for their own spiritual lives?
- Pray more:
  - o Ask that God will make it clear(er) to you how you should proceed and help the church to grow.

*Before next week...*

Go to Session 10 and answer the questions on the first page of the lesson. We will share from those questions and your spiritual reflection when we get together again.





What role have the spiritual practices played in that change?

*Insights from Others:*

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Paul writes the letter of Philippians to the leaders of the congregation. He addresses it to “the overseers and deacons.” In what ways does Paul’s message influence their leadership?

According to what we’ve read and studied, what does Paul expect of Christian leaders?

How should leaders follow the example of Christ found in the Christ hymn (2:5-11)?

Yet Paul also addresses “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi.” What is Paul’s hope for all of these believers?

How can the leaders of the congregation AND the members of the congregation work together to achieve these goals?

**Read Philippians 2:12-16a.**

- What does it mean that God “works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure”?  
*God is at work through his Spirit. God is shaping us to be more like Christ. God is working in you and through you to help others come to be more like Jesus, too.*
- How can we allow God to work in us?  
*Answers should touch on spiritual practices that connect us with God and with one another.*

Paul wants them to “shine like stars in the world” through their lifestyles.

- What does that phrase mean to you?
- Is a church that lives by a Christlike *phronesis* attractive in our world/society? Why or why not?  
*Responses might be mixed here. Allow them to discuss it within the group. If the group swings towards the negative, highlight ways in which people often live/work like Christ did in his ministry: caring for the poor and marginalized; worrying about the sick; taking care of refugees and orphans. If their answers are more positive, also highlight the counter-cultural aspects of Christianity: absolute truth, desire for people to submit to God and live for him, ethical boundaries, etc.*

Paul wants all believers to develop the *phronesis* of Christ. What would that look like in your congregation and context?

Throughout your spiritual practices for this last week you were asked to listen and discern. You were to listen to God, to your own heart, and to others in your congregation. This listening would help us begin to discern what God wants from us as a congregation

and as its leaders. This would allow us to begin discussing God's preferred future for us. Take some time to discuss that together.

- What do you think God's preferred future is for you, individually?
  
- What do you think God wants from you as a spiritual leader?
  
- What do you think God wants this congregation to do/be/become?

Dream of a trajectory together that will help achieve that vision.

***Questions to Consider:***

- ***What things do we need to do now?***
- ***What practices should we begin to implement?***
- ***Where do we hope to be in the next 6 months? Year? Three years? Five years?***
- ***How will we know we are achieving our goals?***

As a leader, what should my role be in this process?

***They should highlight ideas of personal spiritual formation as well as helping others come to look more like Christ. This might be through small groups, serving, working together on a project, teaching a Bible class, mentoring, etc.***

How do you plan to continue developing a Christlike *phronesis* in your own life?

How will we know if we are being successful?

**Read Philippians 3:12-15.**

How do these words give you hope as a spiritual leader?

Dear Journeyer,

Our time together is drawing to a close! We hope you have had a wonderful experience through the course of this curriculum. Think back on where you started just a few short months ago... How have you changed and grown?

Through these past ten sessions we pray that you have been drawn closer to God. This curriculum intentionally draws on classic spiritual practices that are meant to stretch the practitioner and teach them new ways to connect with God. This might have been a wonderful experience for you as you learn more about God and yourself. It might have been a challenging practice for you, realizing that you have a lot of growing to do. Most of us probably felt both of these through this experience. That is ok! We pray that God will continue to draw you closer to him. Continue these spiritual practices; find others that help you, as well. Continue drawing closer to God and God will draw closer to you. “Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9b).

We pray that this journey through Philippians has helped you deepen your understanding of spiritual leadership. We hope that you have come to see leadership in a new light. Spiritual leadership isn’t just governance or decision-making; rather, it is about helping others draw closer to God, develop a Christlike *phronesis* in their own lives, and help them live into God’s preferred future for them.

We also pray that you have a renewed sense of clarity, purpose, and hope when it comes to your congregation. There is no perfect church, and none of us works with a perfect congregation. Every person, and every church, can continue to grow and mature as they learn to integrate a Christlike *phronesis* in their own lives. We pray that, through your congregation, God will receive “glory forever and ever” (Phil. 4:20).

Whatever your model of leadership in the past, God wants to help you develop into deeper *spiritual* leaders. We can “forget what is behind and strain towards what is ahead” (Phil. 3:13). God wants to help each of us develop our Christlike *phronesis* and to help others do the same.

Our journey through this curriculum is drawing to a close, but the adventure is just beginning. We pray that this curriculum has introduced you to some of the practices, tools, and ways of thinking that will help you become more Christlike in the way you think, feel, act, and live. And through this interaction we believe that God has created a group of leaders who want to help the congregation grow in these ways, too! Great excitement awaits as you see how God will transform your community of faith.

But always remember that spiritual leadership isn't about personal glory, honor, or renown. The names of most of the great spiritual leaders throughout the past two centuries are unknown to us; but they have left behind a great legacy of faith that we are partakers in. Do not let ambition, pride, or arrogance get in the way of leading your congregation. Instead, remember to practice the humility and *kenosis* of Christ. We might not save the world; we might not transform the entire congregation; but we can influence hearts and lives as we teach them to live with the *phronesis* of Christ. And realize that God will get all the glory for the work that we do.

May your *phronesis*, your way of thinking, feeling, and acting, grow to become more and more like Christ's. May God give you encouragement in Christ, comfort from his love, and participation in the Spirit. May you continue to draw closer to God and help others do the same. And may "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" as you lead others. God bless you on this next step in your adventure with him!

Dear Group Leader,

Thank you so much for your leadership over the past few months. You have been a blessing to your group, because you have challenged them and stretched them in ways they have never considered. We pray that you were blessed by this experience and that you have grown in your own spiritual life and Christian leadership.

Think back on everything that has been accomplished over these past few weeks. You helped a group of people deepen their relationships with one another, draw closer to God, become more vulnerable and transparent about their lives, and dream new dreams about the future. You have watched them grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally through this process, and you have had a significant role in the spiritual formation of these individuals and the congregation in which they serve. Many will be blessed because of the work that you have done.

Your role isn't through, however. We ask that you continue to pray for these leaders. Lift them up before the Father. Continue to check up on them; hold them accountable for the next steps they wanted to undertake. Maybe host a follow-up event in six months and see how things are going for them, allowing them all to reconnect. Continue to help them draw closer to God and to one another.

We are so thankful for the ways in which you are blessing individual Christians and specific congregations. But we know, too, that you have been a blessing to the Kingdom of God as a whole. God is already doing great things through this endeavor that you have undertaken.

We want to leave you with the words of the Apostle Paul as he closed out his letter: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." May God continue to bless and guide you.